OLD!

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES

retro GAMER

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THE **AWARD WINNING** GAMES MAGAZINE

CLASSIC GAME
THANATOS
CONTROLLING A GIANT DRAGON HAS NEVER BEEN SO MUCH FUN





THE MAKING OF METAL SLUG

HOW SNK REINVENTED THE RUN-AND-GUN FOR A NEW GENERATION



IN THIS ISSUE OF RETRO GAMER

GAME GEAR
GREAT GAMES AND PERIPHERALS THAT YOU SHOULDN'T BE WITHOUT

RAINBIRD
HOW TELECOMSOFT CREATED ITS LUXURY 16-BIT LABEL

BRUCE EVERISS
THE FORMER MANAGER OF IMAGINE SOFTWARE DISCUSSES THE COMPANY'S PAST

SPACE HARRIER
WE HEAD OFF INTO THE FANTASY ZONE AND LOOK BACK AT SEGA'S BLISTERINGLY FAST ARCADE HIT

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THE RETROBATES

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE LICENSED GAME?



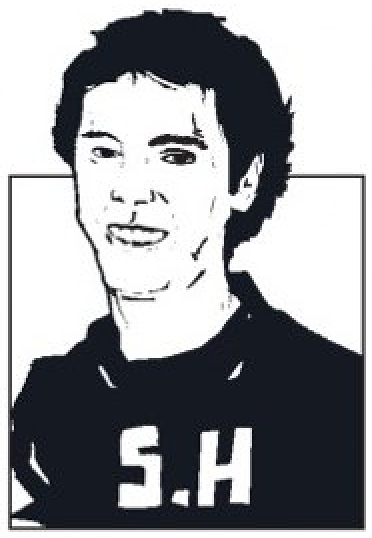
DARRAN JONES

I'm going for *Run The Gauntlet*. It was a fun sports hybrid from Ocean that really captured the spirit of the TV show.

Expertise:
Juggling a gorgeous wife, two beautiful girls and an award-winning magazine

Currently playing:
Magic: The Gathering Online

Favourite game of all time:
Strider



STUART HUNT

Easy: Ocean's *RoboCop*. I remember repeatedly watching the game trailer on my VHS copy before it came out, and it didn't disappoint. It was a significant crossroads for the genre and Ocean.

Expertise:
Games with flying bits in them

Currently playing:
Rayman Origins

Favourite game of all time:
Rayman Origins



PAUL DAVIES

Does *Mickey Mouse In Castle Of Illusion* count? If not, the *TMNT* beat-'em-up from Konami was superb!

Expertise:
Constantly banging my head against a brick wall

Currently playing:
Halo: CE Anniversary Edition

Favourite game of all time:
Ghouls 'N Ghosts



IAIN LEE

Monkey on the C16. I never played it but I was envious of all those C16 owners who got to have a game about one of my favourite TV shows. I'm guessing it was rubbish.

Expertise:
Pretending to be an American on Xbox Live

Currently playing:
Halo: CE Anniversary Edition

Favourite game of all time:
Elite (the BBC Model B version)



JASON KELK

I've always had a soft spot for *Street Hawk* on the Spectrum. Not the final game but the *Defender*-inspired 'subscribers edition' released a year before, which always seemed more fun to me.

Expertise:
Being a homebrew hero

Currently playing:
Plural (C64)

Favourite game of all time:
Io



PAUL DRURY

Skipping the too obvious *GoldenEye*, can I go for the second most obvious and say Atari's *Star Wars*? Finding a cockpit cab in an arcade was like hitting that exhaust port...

Expertise:
16k RAM Packs

Currently playing:
Mario Kart 7

Favourite game of all time:
Sheep In Space



JOHN SZCZEPANIAK

Samurai Pizza Cats on the Famicom. Great platformer. Did you know the cartoons were all ad-libbed?

Expertise:
Anything obscure

Currently playing:
El Shaddai: Ascension Of The Metatron

Favourite game of all time:
Star Control II



RICHARD BURTON

I always had a soft spot for *The Rocky Horror Show* – a great little puzzler on the Spectrum. It looked and felt like the movie while being quirky, fun and slightly subversive.

Expertise:
Stuff and nonsense

Currently playing:
N+

Favourite game of all time:
Manic Miner



MARTYN CARROLL

Jaws Unleashed, although it seems to have been based on those crazy *Shark Attack* movies, not Spielberg's masterpiece.

Expertise:
8-bits and bobs

Currently playing:
Crash Bandicoot 2

Favourite game of all time:
Jet Set Willy

LOADING...



At the time of writing we're only a week away from Christmas. I'm excited, and not just because my in-laws are buying me the lavish board game *Fortune & Glory: The Cliffhanger*. No, I'm excited because we are so close to our 100th issue that I can taste it (and a delicious taste it is).

Both Stuart and myself feel a massive weight on our shoulders, and I'd be lying if I hadn't considered doing a *Leisure Suit Larry* and simply skipping the issue in question. But we won't, because if there's one thing I've learned from recent issues of the magazine, it's that there's never been a better time to be into retro gaming. Companies like Sega are finally realising the potential of digital downloads, while we're getting access to more developers, all with their own interesting stories to tell. This is particularly true of our cover feature, the magnificent *Metal Slug*. A happy accident led to the revealing of *Metal Slug*'s original creator, and now we've got the scoop on this genuine genre-breaker. Nearly 100 issues after the magazine's launch, there are still plenty of new stories to tell. And boy, have we got some doozies in our upcoming issues.

Enjoy the magazine,



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>> Load 98 Breathing new life into classic games

FEATURED



RETRO REVIVALS

In the hot seat this month…





"A refined bloodbath that actually makes sense" Samuel Roberts

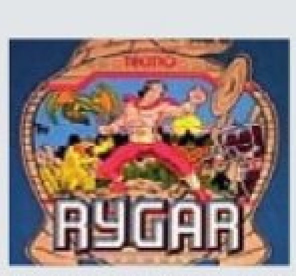




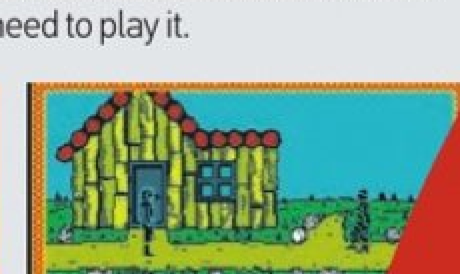




retro GAMER.net READER'S REVIVAL







ESSENTIALS

RETRO RATED



retro radar

>> GIVE US TWO MINUTES AND WE'LL GIVE YOU THE RETRO WORLD



>> So, here we are at the start of a brand New Year. Blaze has unveiled its interesting GameGadget, which has the potential to be very exciting, while Paul Ranson explains Dizzy's recent iOS comeback. Enjoy!

CONTENTS





THE iPOD OF RETRO?

BLAZE ANNOUNCES A NEW MULTIPLE-EMU GAMING DEVICE AND ITUNES-STYLE DOWNLOAD SERVICE FOR CLASSIC GAMES

Since its launch on January 9th 2001, iTunes has significantly changed the way we buy and listen to music, offering a library of millions of music tracks and videos that can be accessed instantly.

Similarly, Apple has transformed the landscape of mobile gaming through iOS and the App Store, offering a new platform for affordable original games, classics and homebrew development.

Clearly watching the meteoric success Apple has seen in the entertainment space, and the recent resurgence of classic retro games, console manufacturer Blaze has announced plans to release a new open source gaming device it is billing as a 'go anywhere – play everything' games console, which it has called the GameGadget.

"What we've done is basically develop a dedicated gaming device, but along similar lines to an iPod, so you've got the ability to add content to it, from a variety of different platforms, developers and publishers, and play games in the way that they were intended to be played," explains Mark Garrett, General Manager of Blaze Europe.

Blaze feels that there is one area where Apple's ultra-successful hardware is lacking when it comes to offering retro fans the chance to play classic games on a portable device.

"Ultimately, the iPod isn't the greatest gaming device in the world," says Mark. "Most of these games weren't developed with the touch screen in mind, so that whole gaming experience of not being able to feel because of the buttons is sorely lacking."

The GameGadget will therefore be disregarding touch-screen controls and use the time-honoured D-pad-and-button control scheme instead. Inside it has 2GB of on-board memory, but it offers portable expansion through the use of SD cards, which can be used to store not only games but also music and photos too.

At the heart of the device is some clever multitasking firmware, which operates a number of emulators that can automatically recognise various extension types, and this has been especially designed to make emulation and emulator switching simple, easy and seamless.

"We've used open source code," explains Mark, "but we developed it specifically to work with this device, so everything is pretty much built from the ground up, and while we haven't got the emulation at this stage, it will go up to 32-bit."

Of course, open-source handheld consoles capable of playing multiple emulators aren't anything new, but Blaze's strategy is to work with game developers and publishers to offer them a way to monetise their classic games and IP, while at the same time providing consumers with a safe and simple way to emulate classic games through the console and the customised firmware.

It also hopes to achieve this by launching the GameGadget with its own iTunes/App Store-style software service: gamegadgetgames.com.

Blaze's thinking behind the online portal is twofold: to use the service to streamline, sanction and simplify game downloads, and also help

generate a community of dedicated users and developers to really get behind the device. So how exactly will the download service work, and how much are the games likely to cost?

"Access happens through the gamegadgetgames.com website," explains Mark. "It is like iTunes, in that the software is installed on your computer and then links to the online store to allow for purchases to be downloaded. You simply register your device against that account, and manage it in that way. With regards to price, we're looking at the iTunes model. *Pac-Man* is £2.99 on iTunes, and as publishers won't need to invest anything when adding games to our platform we hope to be more competitive both on single titles and bundle packs."

Blaze is currently in talks with a number of publishers, and the GameGadget's success will rest in their support.

But Blaze also faces a challenge in trying to sway people away from illegally playing game ROMs for free. Its hope is that the device will appeal not only to retro fans but also people who have never played the games before, and who are looking for a simple, safe and easy way to purchase and experience them.

"What we've developed is a solution, where you're able to store the content that you purchase, and download it to your device or PC," says Mark. "It's through that we think we can start to open up into a much broader market, where you've got a younger audience that have pretty much grown up in the last couple of years playing *Angry Birds*, who haven't necessarily experienced *Space Invaders* or *Pac-Man* or any of the simple retro instant experience games rather than the more drawn-out extended experiences you get with the current handheld market."

Whether classic retro games have the same mainstream pull as film and music – and are popular enough to sustain an iTunes-style service – remains to be seen. However, if Blaze can secure the support it is hoping for from the major publishers then an official channel to legally download and play classic games certainly sounds like an interesting and significant step.

The GameGadget (1.0) will be available exclusively from www.gamegadget.net SRP £99.99. GameGadgetGames is scheduled to launch some time in January. *

"You can add content from a variety of platforms, developers and publishers"



» Through the download service gamegadget.com, Blaze hopes to create an online database of retro gaming and a forum where its users can converge and converse.

THE RETRO DEBATE

>> iTunes for classic games, you say?

VISIT RETROGAMER.NET/FORUM TO HAVE YOUR SAY

theantmeister
It's certainly a good idea, but I think they might struggle to get support from the major publishers.

IronMaidenRule
Like other similar devices, I think it is a good idea, but the price point has to be right.

Black Ridge
Hope it works and gets lots of support from developers to provide a decent catalogue of games. I won't play illegal emulators or hacks on other consoles so I will definitely keep an eye on it.

DreamcastRIP
Having to pay to download ROMs of old games in a world where Android, jailbroken iPhones, hacked firmware PSPs, R4 cards on DS, Dingoo, Pandora, et al exist? Challenging, to say the least.

Nemesis
It could be a good alternative to modding your PSP. I don't fancy mucking around with firmware so this could be what I'm looking for.

r0jaws
I honestly can't see it going anywhere; there are just too many readily available, and proven, alternatives. But if they get a reliable, simple and reasonably priced marketplace for downloads, then maybe.

thevulture
Brave move releasing something like this in an already crowded handheld market where people can get all manner of devices to do same or similar job, but not even think of having to pay for the games.

crusto
It's got legs, but only if it does everything extremely well and extremely competitively. I'd be interested as I don't really do jailbreaking, et cetera. I like my devices to do exactly what they say on the tin.

FatTrucker
Any portal that offers the ability to purchase retro games legally is a good thing in principal. As always, it will be largely dependent on pricing, ease of use, quality of the emulation and the variety of titles on offer.

FORUM OPINION
iTunes for classic games, you say?

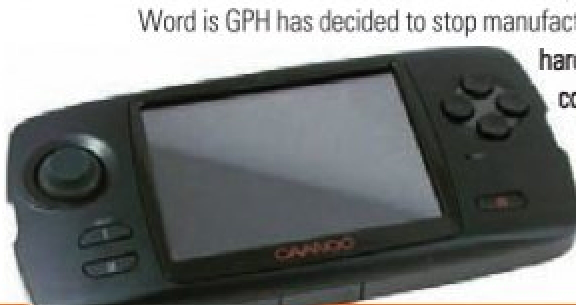


Open source alternatives

>> We take a look at the competition

Company: GamePark/GamePark Holdings series
Device: GP32/GP2X/GP2X Wiz/GP2X CAANOO

These open source handhelds are the most established out there. After releasing its first machine, the GP32, in November 2001, GamePark divided in 2005 and a number of its staff formed GamePark Holdings, which released the GPX2. GamePark filed for bankruptcy in 2007 and its next unit, XGP, was never released. GPH then released the Wiz, the Caanoo and download service www.fungp.com. Word is GPH has decided to stop manufacturing hardware to concentrate on creating software.



Company: Open Pandora
Device: Pandora

One of the things that makes the Pandora special is that its design incorporates a QWERTY keyboard. Making it the Blackberry of open source gaming, this not only gives it the feel of a tiny netbook, but also opens up the machine's versatility – little wonder its creators consider it 'the smallest portable Linux PC'. But all this concentrated power comes at a price. The Open Pandora website lists the price at €375 (for international customers) or €445 (for EU customers, incl. 19% VAT), plus shipping.



Company: Dingoo Digital Technology Company
Device: Dingoo A320

Released in 2009, this open source handheld from China can be seen as a good solid alternative if you're working to a tight budget. The mighty Dingoo supports video playback, and comes with a text reader, an inbuilt radio receiver and a voice recorder too. Coming in two colours, white or black, it has 4GB of on-board memory, and boasts a long battery life as well as solid and varied emulation support. But the best thing about the Dingoo is the price; you can currently pick one up on eBay for around £70.



Here's the bio...
Iain Lee is a freelance broadcaster who loves gaming, particularly retro gaming. He used to present the 11 O'Clock Show, but please don't hold that against him. You can find more information about Iain at **www.iainlee.com**



Hi there. My name's **Iain Lee**. You might remember me from Thumb Bandits and The 11 O'Clock Show, but now I'm here to confess my love for retro gaming



What Kind of Friend Are YOU?

One of the ways I sell my body and soul to survive is by recording a monthly Gamecast for MSN. It's a lot of fun and – dare I say it? – the best videogame podcast on the net... Yes, I bloody well dare.

A listener to it reminded me of something I had forgotten about, yet when I was aged between nine and 15 was probably one of the most important aspects of videogames. In a world where people had different consoles, and you were often round your mates' for your tea, and games were still somewhat mystical and from the future, the style of gamesmanship from the host was vital.

Some friends were generous with their machines. Everyone got a crack at the whip. *That's it, you've had your one go; pass the joystick over or vacate those z and x keys, and let the fat kid have a turn.* (I should point out for legal reasons: I never hung out with any of these 'fat kids'. I am just writing that so it looks like I held no prejudice as a child, when I did. I held shitloads. Get over it. I was a child. It's what we all did).

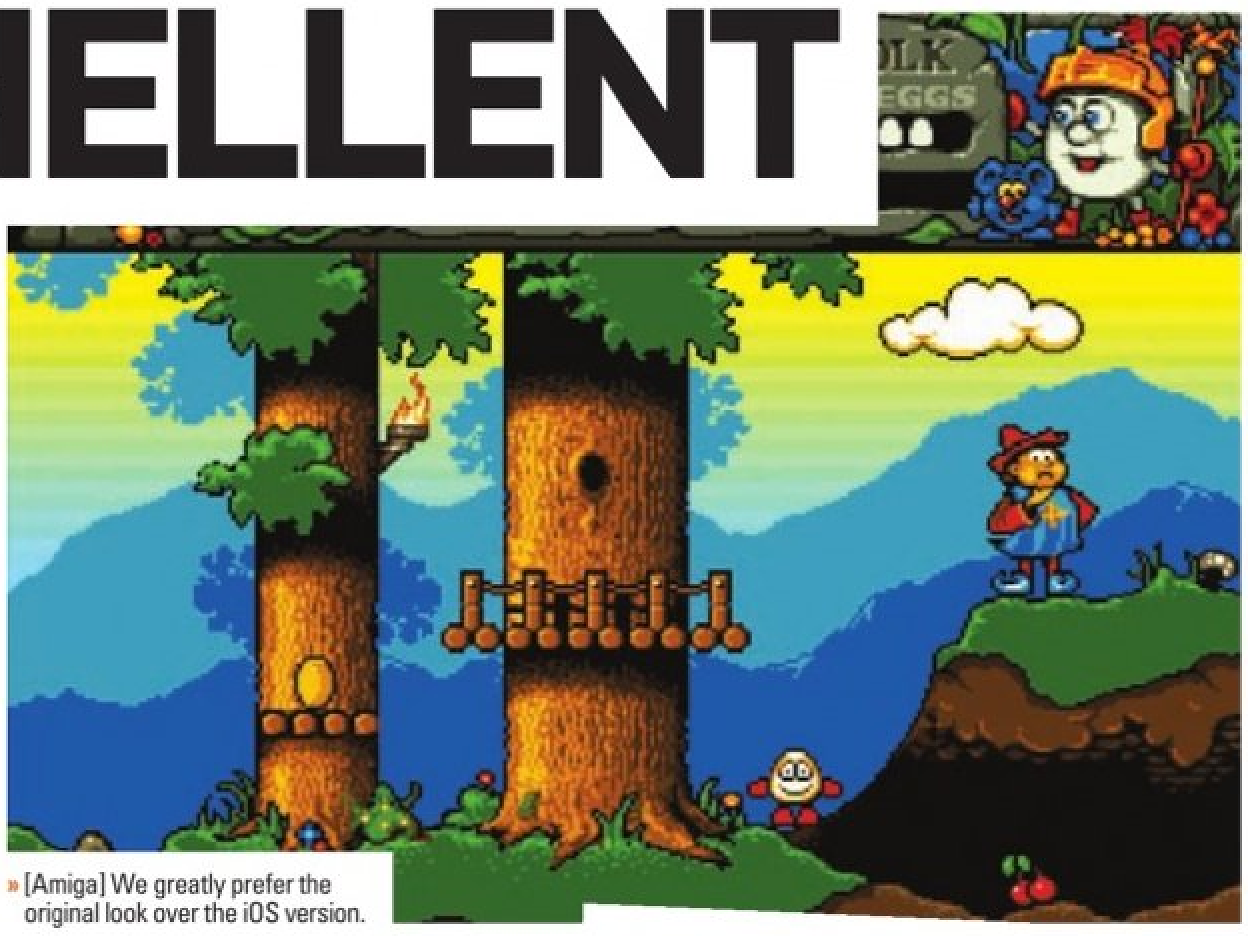
I like to think I was a sharer. I maybe bent that a bit with a 'winner stays on' policy' and made sure I implemented this rule when we were playing a game I was good at, ensuring I got maximum game time, but sharing was definitely the best method there was. Not everyone rolled that way. There was often one child who would give you the crappy non-brand controller. It was a weird shape and colour and had too many buttons on and a slight delay when you did anything with it, rendering it worse than useless unless you were able to anticipate every move three-quarters of a second before you needed to make it. Other kids were a bit more fascistic when it came to sitting in their bedroom for seven hours with a Spectrum. I remember one lad, who shall remain nameless primarily because I have forgotten his name, who would invite you round for a gaming session and then WOULD NOT LET YOU PLAY ANY GAMES. He would play, and you would watch. And that was that. He'd be 'showing' you *Dizzy* for an evening, and we'd all be drooling and champing at the metaphorical to have a go, but we never did. AND WE ACCEPTED IT (it's in capitals because I am shouting at how ridiculous this behaviour now seems).

It would be interesting to see if these behaviours have in any way influenced the later lives of people. Are all sharers working for Oxfam, or social services? Being a winner-stays-on guy seems to tie in with the slightly mercenary business I am in... and those kids that made you watch all afternoon while they either shone like stars or continually crashed and burned? Complete and utter bankers.

Ooh, a bit of social commentary. That's rare for me.

There was often one child who would give you the crappy non-brand controller

EGGSHELLENT NEWS



» [Amiga] We greatly prefer the original look over the iOS version.

HOW CODEMASTERS BROUGHT BACK THE ORIGINAL GOOD EGG

Even now, a month after his eggciting resurreggtion, we still can't believe that *Dizzy* is back. We weren't eggspecting it at all, and while we're not eggsactly pleased with his new look, there's no denying we're happy to have him back. Paul Ranson, who oversaw both the original game and its iOS re-release explains how it all happened.

Retro Gamer: So why has *Dizzy* taken so long to return?
Paul Ranson: It was about the right time and the right place, and iOS feels very much like the spiritual successor to *Dizzy*'s original home of 8-bit and 16-bit machines. It's also 20 years on from when *Dizzy: Prince Of The Yolkfolk* launched as part of the *Dizzy Excellent Adventures* box set, so that seemed like a significant anniversary worth celebrating.

RG: What's it like returning to an old project, and what involvement have the Oliver twins had?
PR: I made my initial presentation to Andrew and Phillip in late 2010/early 2011. I think it is safe to say that they were impressed, flattered and excited that someone other than themselves had taken the time to attempt a professional reboot of *Dizzy*.

It was very much like turning the clock back 20 years as, back in the day, *Dizzy POTY* was the first game without any particular input from Phillip and Andrew. My team at Big Red had been embedded in the development of *Dizzy* games for approaching a year with the Olivers, having worked also on *Magicland Dizzy*, so we could get really inside the shell of *Dizzy*. I think that the puzzles on the whole were not that different to the all the previous games but I would volunteer the ones in *Dizzy Prince Of The Yolkfolk* (and *Spellbound*) had a cultural shift to include more humour than had been present in the previous incarnations.



RG: Why is there no option to play with the original visuals?
PR: We took a whole series of design decisions, one of which was to commission a completely new set of HD graphics. To design these we drafted in another of the original team in the shape of artists Leigh Christian (now at Candy Flame) – his artwork is phenomenal and, given the heritage, he was the perfect fit.

RG: How much pressure is there to live up to fan's expectations?
PR: Dizzy is such a fondly remembered character, especially from people's childhoods. From the first Spectrum/C64 title in 1987 through the turn of the decade into 16-bit and the early console days, his release lifeline pretty much followed every gamers' evolution through the platforms of the time. We also wanted to bring him in one of the games that could be played by younger iOS gamers who had never seen or played a *Dizzy* game before. *POTY* seemed the perfect fit and, judging by my daughters' reactions, this *Dizzy* game is enjoyed today as much as it was back in 1991.

RG: Can we expect to see other *Dizzy* games created in the future, or any other ports?
PR: We're very much looking forward to seeing how *Dizzy POTY* is received when it's released, as a return to popularity could mark the start of a great new eggventure. There's been a lot of love coming from the Eggsbox and LayStation communities for *Dizzy* too. ✱





MICROBYTES

Snippets of news from the exciting world of retro



>> The BBC hits the big 30

All eyes are looking towards the 30th anniversaries of the Spectrum and C64 later this year, but spare a thought for the BBC Micro, which passed its 30th a few short weeks ago. The computer became a firm fixture in classrooms across the UK during the Eighties, thanks to its ties with the BBC's *Computer Literacy Project*, a television show that aimed to teach children the basics of computer science. Acorn Computers won a contract with the BBC based on a demo from its new machine, The Proton, and it was eventually released as the BBC Microcomputer System. The Model A sported 16K, while the Model B had a heftier 32K. "The BBC Micro (and the Acorn Atom, which in many ways was very similar), inspired a generation with the accessibility of technology," revealed *Elite*'s co-creator David Braben, when we spoke to him about the BBC's impact. "A great many people, me included, had our eyes opened to how easy it was to get a computer to do amazing things. Through schools, this changed the lives of many people in a good way. Many of those people went on to do great things as a result; just look around places like Cambridge's Science Park to see the results 30 years on!"

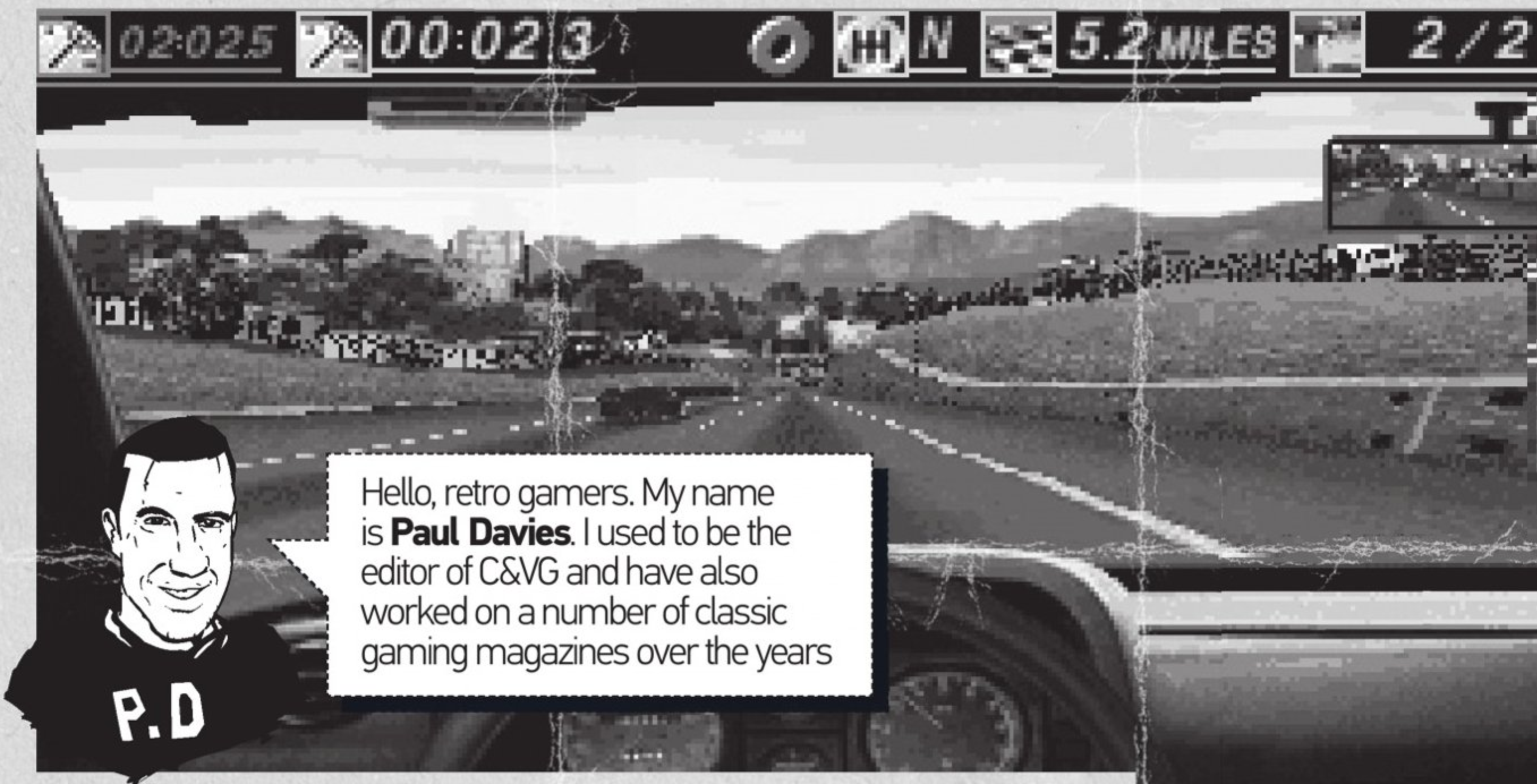


>> Revengeance is mine

It's a big year for Konami, as it sees the company celebrate the 25th anniversary of *Metal Gear*. In addition to releasing a truly excellent *HD Collection* (which we'll be reviewing next month) Konami is also getting ready to unleash *Metal Gear Solid: Rising*. Except that it's not called that anymore… After repeated rumours, Hideo Kojima recently revealed that the original game has been cancelled and that Platinum Games is now looking after the project. Now known as *Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance*, it's looking like a barmy cross between *Bayonetta* and *Vanquish*, two previous Platinum Games titles. Seeing how much we loved both games, we're greatly looking forward to its eventual release.

Here's my bio…
In 1992 I started out on *Mean Machines Sega* and *Nintendo Magazine System*. In 1995 I became editor of *C&VG*. I led the *C&VG* website from 1998 until Christmas 2000, then I left journalism to be concept design manager at Criterion Games. I returned to journalism in 2002 and from 2005 I've been running my own company, Unlikely Hero.

VIDEOGAMES TIMES 5 January 2012



ARE WE THERE YET?

As a Retro Gamer reader, you must be quite the videogame campaigner. Hey, me too! But this enthusiasm could be getting us nowhere.

Right! I've mentioned before about Christmases spent punishing the living room telly; how my family and friends would struggle to see the world through my eyes – my eyes being square-shaped since the age of probably three (I blame *Mary, Mungo And Midge*). To me, the fire effects in *Golden Axe* for the Mega Drive were uncannily realistic. To me, *Ridge Racer* on PlayStation was indistinguishable from real life. Although, okay, real life girls have better animation.

In the end, I got lucky – very lucky – writing for videogame magazines and preaching to the converted. We all saw the same world back then. It was a conversation that didn't need explaining. Eventually, I presumed, mainstream magazines and newspapers would catch the bug, perhaps by simply having to breathe the same air as the games magazines in WH Smiths and local newsagents.

But, you know, no. It didn't happen and still hasn't really happened. In fact, talking to fellow gaming journalists, the mainstream media continues to take a dim view of any game that isn't *Call Of Duty*, and even then only begrudgingly so, if there's a few bucks to be made from advertising.

Videogames are beneath contempt for our newspapers and glossy magazines, other than maybe the lads' mags that can justify talking about *Assassin's Creed* alongside *COD*… and *Zelda* at a push.

Now, it's in my nature to enjoy being all the way down here while superior folks prance and titter gaily somewhere up there. But do videogames still deserve to be so downtrodden, unheard and misunderstood? Does it make me a moron to see so much creative value in a new *Final Fantasy*, even *Mario Kart*? Why does something bizarre need to happen surrounding a game like *Starcraft* involving tragedy or unintended comedy to warrant column inches?

The truth, it seems, is that even after 30 years of popularity, the old guard in charge of UK media has no interest in games, therefore they do not belong. I suppose it's because, in polite society, chatting about your rivalries in *Need For Speed* isn't going to help as much as discussing race horses or the latest prima donna at the Royal Opera House. Talk about videogames is considered trashy, still, and it's only just being allowed into the likes of *The Sun* as a genuine concern. Lately I've also noticed that *Metro* has been blasting videogame features across double pages, so well fought there. Yet it's hard to shake this puzzlement over why videogames continue to be an object of mystery after such a long time. Is it always going to be this way? Makes you wonder what it's going to take.

In hindsight, it didn't help Nintendo all that much for its so-called 'core' games that *Wii Fit* and *Brain Training* became household names. These are novelties, not the norm. However, this has been seen as a potential way in for Sony and Microsoft waving to attract attention.

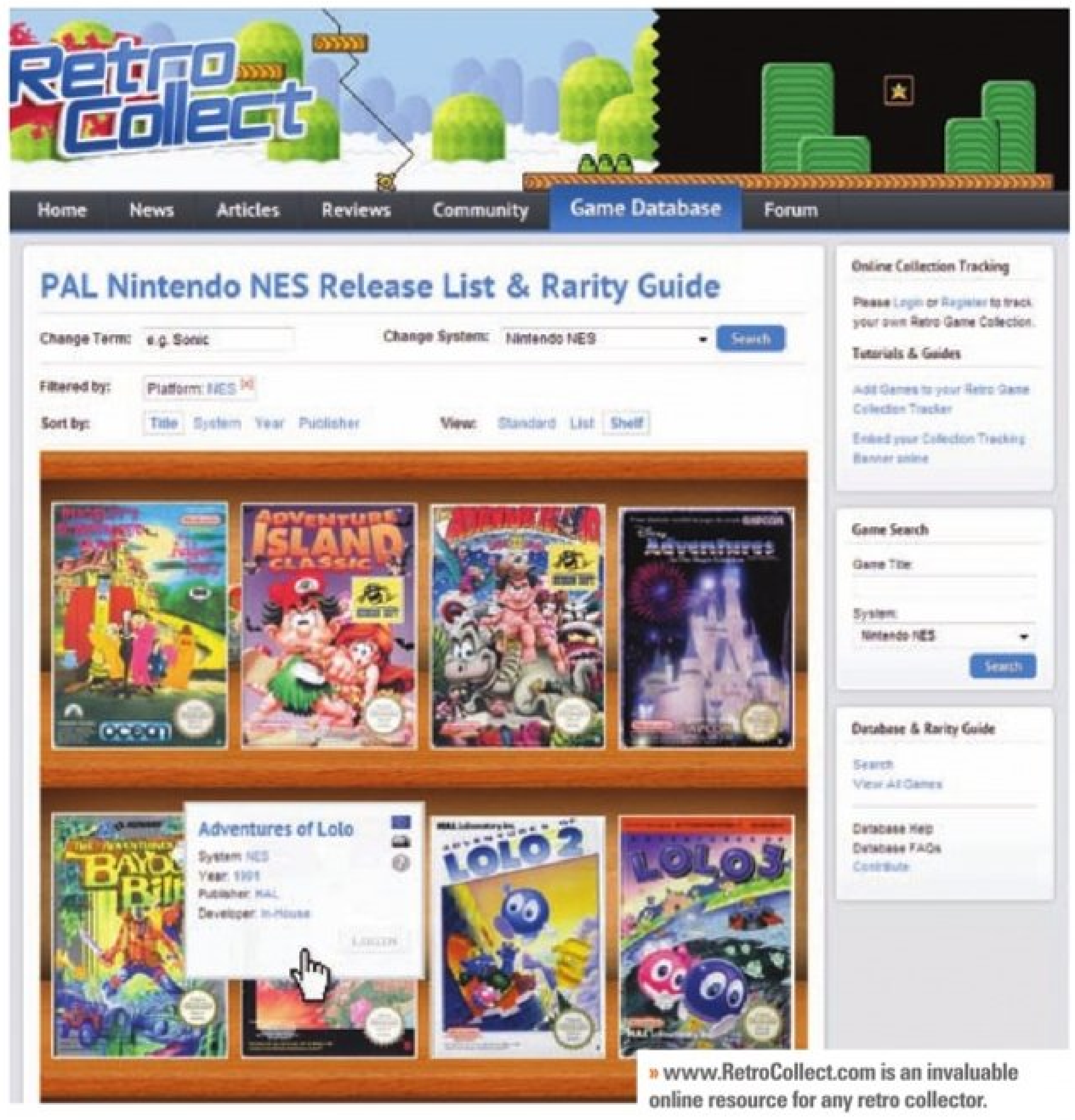
See you back here in another 20 years for Part II. If I ruled the world, et cetera…

> The mainstream media continues to take a dim view of any game that isn't Call Of Duty, and even then only begrudgingly so

FUTURE PROOFED

COLLECTING GAMES HAS NEVER BEEN EASIER

For many, collecting retro games is as important as playing them. And while detailed lists exist for the Japanese and American markets, PAL gamers have always had to make do with inferior sources. RetroCollect has already made a name for itself thanks to its detailed PAL lists and constant retro news updates, but it has now introduced a number of features to make collecting easier. We spoke to RetroCollect co-founder Adam Buchanan to find out more.



» www.RetroCollect.com is an invaluable online resource for any retro collector.

Retro Gamer: Why have you decided to add new features to RetroCollect?
Adam Buchanan: As we continue to draw thousands of visitors a day and watch our community grow, we want to offer our users much more of our shared vision to create a home for both retro gamers and collectors.

RG: How did the Shelf View and Collection Statistics come about?
AB: With countless collections already being tracked within our Collection Tracker, we needed to offer our loyal community further ways to access their data. As many of these collectors will be more than familiar with the sight of their very own collections arranged on shelving in alphabetical order at home, it only made sense to offer the same digitally.

On the other hand, the Collection Statistics page was introduced as an extensive way to help manage any collection. Those wanting to keep track of the games they still need, what percentage of each platform's library they own or even how many rare games are in their possession now have the tools to do so.



RG: There appears to be a real focus on persuading people to go for complete collections. Is this intentional on your part?
AB: While our online tools offer the functionality for collectors to aim towards complete collections, we always have and always will encourage retro gamers to collect whatever their heart desires. RetroCollect is here to aid gamers on their journey into gaming past, whatever path they lead. To further guide collectors this way, we have added a recommendation feature, highlighting the best titles and hidden gems within a console library.

RG: What future plans do you have for RetroCollect moving ahead?
AB: RetroCollect users can expect to see a whole new selection of features over the coming months, including the addition of collection achievements. As we appreciate every collector has their own niche, we want them to be rewarded for tackling their very own micro collections. For example, this will include trophies for tracking down every *Zelda*, *Sonic* or *Mario* release, bragging rights for owning a selection of extremely rare titles and even rewards for those interested in the more obscure side of retro gaming.

RG: How do you apply rarity ratings?
AB: The rarity is determined through a mix of extensive research and years of experience in the field. We consult with experts on a particular console and collaboratively try to gauge the availability of every game across the various PAL countries.

RG: Why do you think RetroCollect continues to remain so popular?
AB: As retro gaming becomes more popular, the demand for websites like RetroCollect continues to grow. Previously the desire for such a resource has been partially met by websites focusing on specific platforms or companies, often leaving gamers and collectors seeking an all-in-one solution for their gaming needs. This naturally leads to the increasing popularity of RetroCollect, which further strengthens the community. *

VITA LAUNCH ANNOUNCED



The PS Vita's launch is just under two months away, and there are already plenty of games that are exciting us. The new *Uncharted* goes without question (Darran is a massive fan), but there is plenty for retro fans to enjoy. *WipEout 2048* is a launch title, *Everybody's Golf Vita* ties in with the franchise's 15-year anniversary, while *Ridge Racer* and *Ultimate Marvel Vs. Capcom 3* will also be available. Best of all, though, is the news that *Super Stardust* will be getting a sequel in the form of *Super Stardust Delta*. Roll on, 22 February…

THE VAULT

TREASURES FROM THE RETRO CHEST

TREASURE OF THE MONTH



Andross T-Shirt

- **RRP:** £24 (approx £15.50)
- **Buy it from:** www.meatbun.us

The first image of *Star Fox*'s nefarious fox-hating simian space scientist was an unsettling sight to behold; a 3D polygon head with thin glowing eyes and enough sucking power to cause Sir James Dyson to return to his drawing board. One of the most memorable boss encounters in Super Nintendo gaming history, Andross is the focus of this stylishly understated tee from Meat Bun, forming part of its striking new range of videogame **boss**-inspired apparel.

Retro Gaming Party Invitations

- **RRP:** £1.85 per invite (£1.11 in bulk)
- **Buy it from:** www.zazzle.co.uk

If you're planning on having a birthday this year and are also thinking of throwing a party to celebrate the fact, might we suggest you send the 'written implores' on these cool retro gaming-themed birthday invitations? Take it from experience; it's so much cheaper than placing an advert in a national newspaper or hiring a skywriter for a week to fly over the homes of friends and loved ones. Hey, it's just a suggestion.





Metal Sonic Statue

- **RRP:** $319.99 (approx £204) or $149.99 (approx £95) for regular version
- **Buy it from:** www.bigbadtoystore.com

These expensive videogame statues clearly have a market, but we're baffled as to who forks out for them. We've never actually seen one in the wild, only as images on the internet, and this leads us to suspect that maybe they're figments of our imagination. Well, this month we possibly hallucinated these pricey Metal Sonic statues. One lights up and the other doesn't, making them almost-perfect illuminating bookends for literate hardcore *Sonic* fans.



Pac-Man's little yellow dress

- **RRP:** $31.99 (approx £20)
- **Buy it from:** www.bigbadtoystore.com

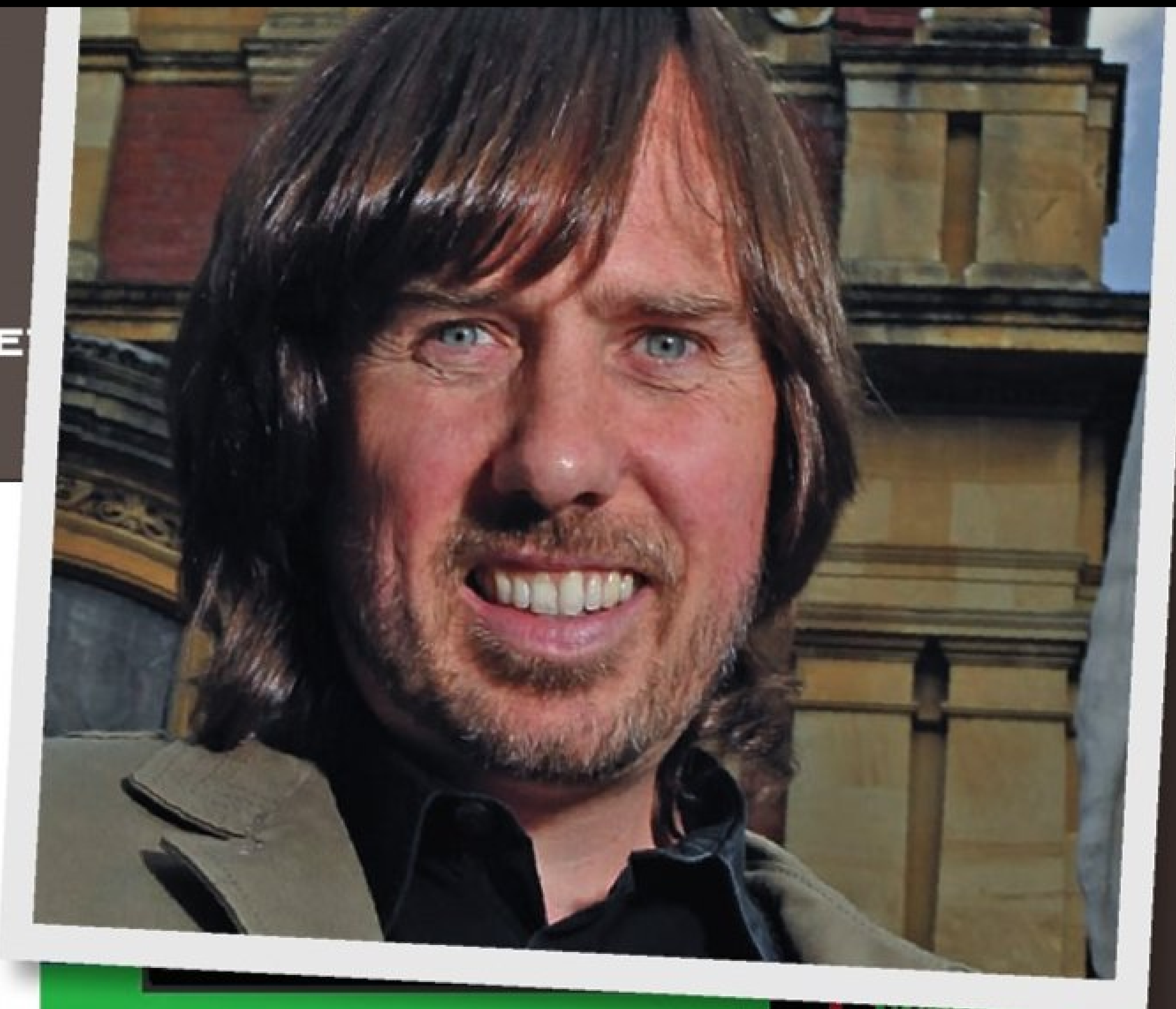
We've heard of men getting their girlfriends to dress up like Slave Leia and Lara Croft, but Pac-Man? If there is something sexual about a yellow circle, we've yet to discover it. But imaging this scenario: you purchase a Versace box off eBay, neatly nestle this dress inside the box, and on the evening of your wedding anniversary present it to your wife before eating at that snooty restaurant she's booked a table at. She'll be well chuffed when she opens it.



Arcade button coaster set

- **RRP:** £9.99 pack of 4
- **Buy it from:** www.retrogt.com

Where does the term 'coaster' come from? A quick scan on Google reveals we are actually the first humans to ever ponder its origin. This means that either there is no interesting answer to that question, the answer is plainly obvious, or we are new pioneers in useless inquisition. Anyway, what we do know is that these cool arcade button-inspired coasters from Retro GT make perfect surface protectors for game rooms.



*A MOMENT WITH...

David Darling

This month, Darran Jones catches up with Codemasters co-founder David Darling, who has launched his new app company Kwalee

Who is David Darling?

David Darling CBE began making games in the early Eighties. He formed Codemasters in 1986 with his brother and father, making budget games before moving to full-priced releases and finding success with various racing franchises. He left Codemasters in 2007.

Which one of your games would you recommend to our readers and why?
The new games we're working on are top secret at the moment.

So what *can* you tell us about Kwalee?
Kwalee is an app developer and publishing company I've just set up to make extremely high quality original games for iPhone and other mobile devices.

Do you see parallels between the handheld industry today and gaming in the Eighties?
I'm excited about technology and how fast it can change culture, society and the way we live and work. Smartphones are similar in scale to the revolution in technology that was home computers in the Eighties.

Will you be concentrating on games?
Mostly on games, but we've got some other ideas that are not games, and I don't want to stop Kwalee from developing them.

What industry veteran do you most admire, and why?
My brother Richard [co-founder of Codemasters], because he is brilliant, original, creative and most of all modest.

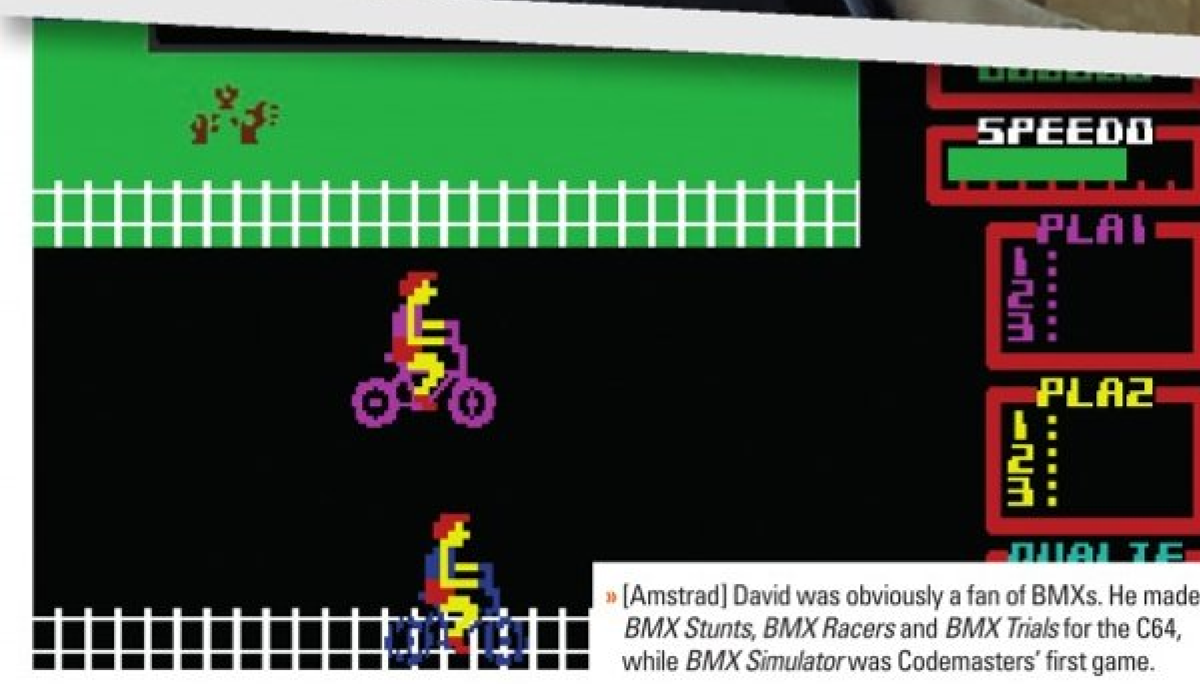
What's the most difficult thing you've ever encountered working on a game?
Being taken all the way up to the Supreme Court of the United States by Nintendo and Miyamoto for creating the Game Genie videogame enhancer and winning.



What's the proudest moment you've had in the videogames industry?
Being given my Commander of the British Empire medal (CBE) by her majesty Queen Elizabeth II, for services to the computer games industry.

And what was the worst?
I don't have any regrets. Life is all about learning.

How do you think the industry has changed in the last 20 years?
Technology has progressed so much. My grandfather designed colour TVs in the Fifties; he loved technology and said he'd been born a century too early. He would have loved the iPhone 4S! But good gameplay felt as good 20 years ago as it does now – it's about human feelings, and they don't really change. *



» [Amstrad] David was obviously a fan of BMXs. He made *BMX Stunts*, *BMX Racers* and *BMX Trials* for the C64, while *BMX Simulator* was Codemasters' first game.





Readers needed

Choose your favourite moments for Retro Gamer's 100th issue

As **Retro Gamer** approaches its 100th issue, we wanted to put together a feature that all our readers could be involved with. Videogames are filled with great moments, moments so defining that they stick in the memory of everybody that experiences them. Maybe you were stunned the first time Psycho Mantis made that joypad move in *Metal Gear Solid*, or perhaps the first time you successfully docked a spaceship in *Elite* has always stayed with you. Whatever it is, we want to know about it so we can put together a definitive list. And, who knows, your own personal entry might actually get included. Send your entry to retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk.

You can list as many moments as you like, but they need to be moments everyone will have experienced, not just personal achievements like finally beating a boss. We've included a couple of examples to give you an idea.

Darran
To me, one of the greatest moments in games is the downhill run on *Strider's* second level. As you climb to the summit of a mountain the music builds beautifully; you then tear down the mountainside with explosions biting at your heels, before leaping over a huge chasm. Even now, 23 years later, I still get goosebumps playing it.



Stuart
Christmas time in *Shenmue* was a memorable moment; seeing the snow fall, a drunken Santa appear and the shopkeepers of Duboita Street prepare for the holiday by hanging bunting and decorations. It's a highlight that you know is coming, and you anxiously await, and doesn't disappoint when it arrives.



retrodiary

6 January – 2 February

>> A month of retro events both past and present



6 January 1983
Melbourne House stops Horace from being hungry and introduces him to the sport of skiing. Lorry! Tree!



7 January 1985
■ Jon Ritman lays one off to Ocean Software, which toe punts *Match Day* up the Spectrum charts.



7 January 2005
■ *The Legend Of Zelda: Four Swords Adventures* gets its UK release on the GameCube.



8 January 1988
■ Konami releases its run-and-gun arcade coin-op classic *Super Contra* into arcades across the land.



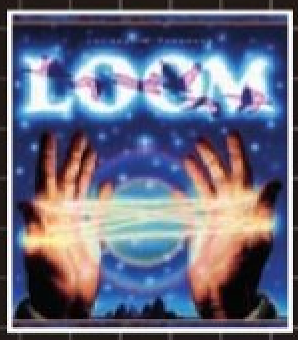
10 –13 January 2012
■ The Consumer Electronic Show is once again staged at the Las Vegas Convention Centre.



10 January 2012
■ *Gotham City Impostors*, a downloadable multiplayer FPS with customisable players, is due for release.



12 January 2007
■ *Children Of Mana*, the next instalment in the Square Enix *Mana* franchise, is released on the Nintendo DS.



15 January 1990
■ Lucasfilm releases the fantasy adventure *Loom* on PC.



16 February 2009
■ Chinese company, Dingoo Digital Technology, releases the Dingoo A320 handheld console.



20 January 1960
■ Will Wright, co-founder of the development company Maxis and designer of *The Sims* series, is born.



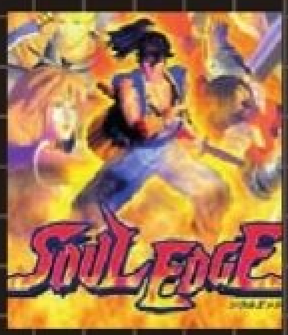
24 January 2012
■ *Silent Hill HD Collection* – *Silent Hill 2* and *3* with new voiceovers – is out on PS3 and Xbox 360. Nurse!



27 January 2012
■ 3DS owners will finally be able to get to grips with *Resident Evil Revelations*.



28 January 1993
■ *Super Mario Land 2: 6 Golden Coins* is released on Nintendo's Game Boy across Europe.



29 January 1996
■ A new coin-op game from Namco, *Soul Edge*, hits the arcades. It's the first game in the *Soul Calibur* series.



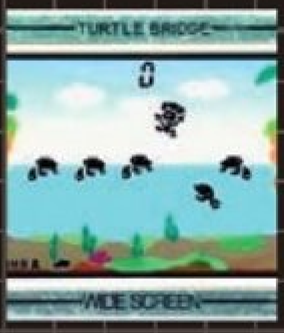
29 January 1998
■ Exclusive to the Sega Saturn, the most excellent *Panzer Dragoon Saga* makes its worldwide debut in Japan.



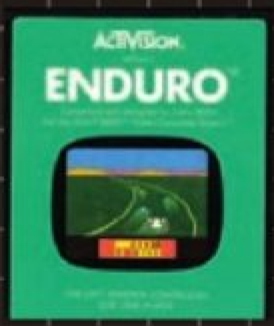
1 February 1967
■ Jonathan 'Joffa' Smith, ZX Spectrum programmer extraordinaire, is born.



1 February 1980
■ Science of Cambridge Ltd releases a computer that you can build from kit form for just £99. The ZX80 is born.



1 February 1982
■ Nintendo releases *Turtle Bridge*, the latest title in its Game & Watch handheld series.



1 February 1983
■ Activision releases *Enduro* on the Atari 2600.



2 February 2012
■ New issue of **Retro Gamer** hits the streets.

retro GAMER

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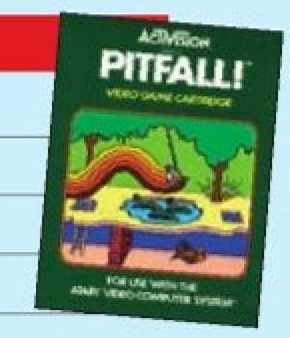
BACK TO THE EIGHTIES

CHARTS

NOVEMBER 1982

ATARI 2600

1. Pitfall! (Activision)
2. Berzerk (Atari)
3. Defender (Atari)
4. Demon Attack (Imagic)
5. Star Master (Activision)





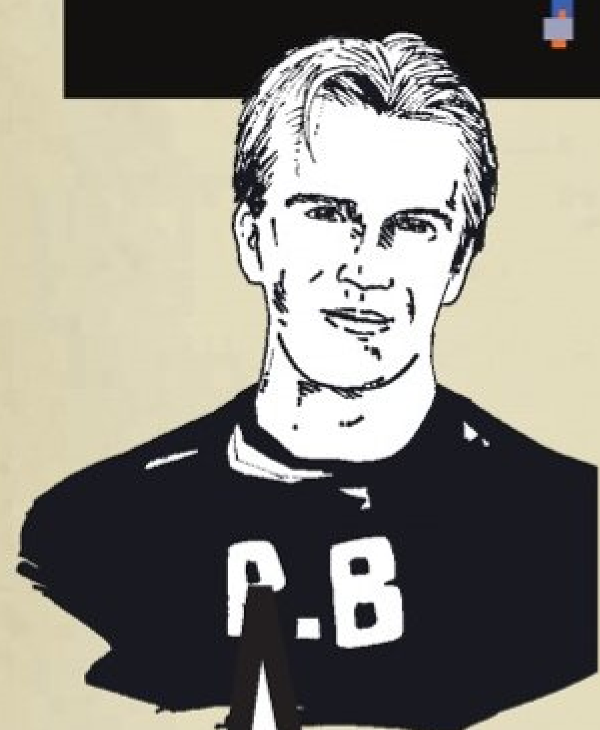
» [Arcade] *Robotron: 2084* is one of the most perfect arcade games ever created. Fact.

» [Spectrum] Melbourne House's take on *The Hobbit* was pitched just right to entice non-adventurers to take the plunge.





THE LATEST NEWS FROM OCTOBER 1982



NOVEMBER 1982 – Atari 5200 arrives, Melbourne House takes on Tolkien, Automata goes for gold, Z-Man turns official, Robotron: 2084 in UK arcades and Caveman on UK dinner tables. Richard Burton wipes the egg off his loincloth…

Tangerine Computer Systems ran into production problems with its impending release of the Oric-1. Both the 16K and 48K variants were now hoped to have a mid-December release. Critically for Tangerine, it would miss out on much of the Christmas trade while the competition forged ahead…

Having been released in August in America, the Commodore 64, like the Oric-1, was due for its UK release this month, but this was also delayed until mid-December. As a result the VIC-20, which was due to be dropped, would continue in production well into 1983.

Atari launched its newest console in America, the 5200 or Advanced Video Entertainment System, after previewing it earlier in the year. The powerful machine had a CPU based on the Atari 400 computer. Promising and looking the natural successor to the reliable old faux wooden-fronted 2600, it was strangely overlooked by Atari going forward, which seemed more intent on squeezing the last few drops of gaming goodness out of the 2600.

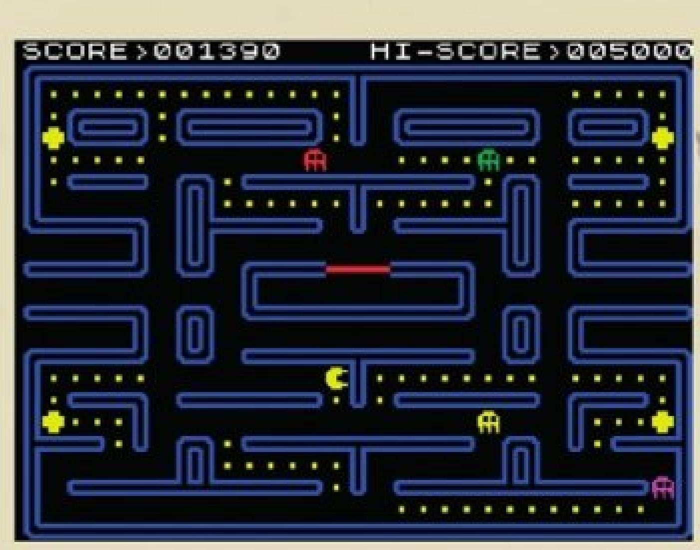
The 5200 criminally faded from view. It was potentially a great system, albeit with some absolutely rubbish controllers featuring a non-centring stick that made many a game a chore to play. The controller did have the innovative feature of a pause button, though, so you could stop and survey your impending death due to the crapness of control.

Sharp announced its newest home micro, the MZ-700, and promptly released it in Japan. It made it to UK shores a year later. The distinctive-looking machine had a built-in tape deck and printer, and it sold steadily in Japan. However, the UK didn't take to it at all, and despite a hearty effort from the likes of Solo Software and Kuma at giving steady software support, a lack of quality games helped consign it to early retirement.

Melbourne House had great news for fans of Tolkien and text adventures, having arranged a deal to produce an adventure based on *The Hobbit*. The adventure would be available on the Spectrum initially, with conversions to several other formats later. It would come complete with a paperback version of *The Hobbit*. Good job too considering its £14.95 price tag.

Another adventure released for the Spectrum this month, as well as the Dragon 32, ZX81 and BBC, was *Pimania* from Automata. Despite the game being mostly illogical, user-unfriendly and tediously slow to play, the chance to glean the location of the specially commissioned Golden Sundial of Pi swayed many to part with a crisp £10 note. The adventure would point you to a real location somewhere in the UK, which you would have to travel to at a specified time.

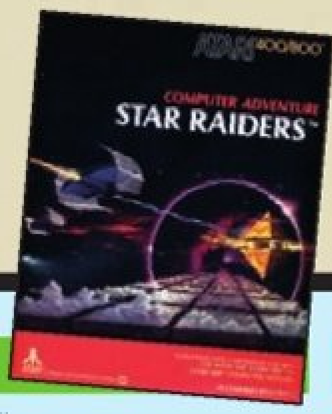
The sundial was worth £6,000 and made from gold laced with diamond, obsidian and lapis lazuli. It was eventually found in the mouth of the chalk White Horse on

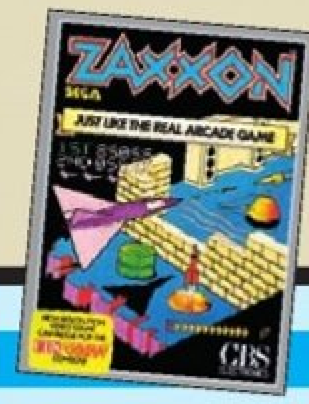


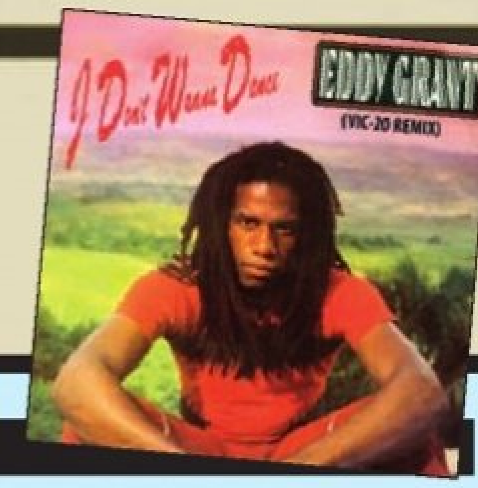
» [Spectrum] From unofficial, Atari-annoying *Z-Man* to official, Atarisoft-released *Pac-Man*. Nice work.



» The Sharp MZ-700 never made much of an impact in the UK and software houses never made many games for it either.







ATARI 400/800	
1	Star Raiders (Atari)
2	Pac-Man (Atari)
3	Missile Command (Atari)
4	Jawbreaker (Atari)
5	Centipede (Atari)

COLECOVISION	
1	Zaxxon (Coleco)
2	Space Panic (Coleco)
3	Venture (Coleco)
4	Lady Bug (Coleco)
5	Donkey Kong (Coleco)

MUSIC	
1	I Don't Wanna Dance (Eddy Grant)
2	Heartbreaker (Dionne Warwick)
3	Mirror Man (Human League)
4	Mad World (Tears For Fears)
5	Sexual Healing (Marvin Gaye)

NOVEMBER 1982 NEWS

7 November saw the Thames Flood Barrier become operational for the first time. Built to protect London from tidal surges, the ten steel gates can be raised to the height of a five-storey building.

30 November brought the release of Michael Jackson's sixth studio album, *Thriller*, by Epic Records. Containing such hits as *Beat It*, *The Girl Is Mine*, *Billie Jean* and the title track *Thriller*, the album is estimated to have sold upwards of 100 million copies since its release.


» "Have you got a video?" "Yes. We've. Got. A. Video!"

On 2 November, Channel 4 began broadcasting in the UK. With only BBC1, BBC2 and ITV as the other viewing options, Channel 4 set out from the off to become an alternative channel with content that would occasionally overstep the mark.

The first programme to air on the new channel was the wordy quiz show *Countdown*, hosted by Richard Whiteley and ably assisted by Carol Vorderman. It still runs on the channel, albeit with a change of personnel. In the evening, Channel 4 treated viewers to a new comedy show, *The Comic Strip Presents…* with the first episode *Five Go Mad In Dorset*. Cue instant cult status.

BBC2 introduced us to the wonderful world of *The Young Ones* on 9 November. The group of four students from Scumbag College and their often surreal and frequently violent slapstick comedy fast became a school and college favourite. Not a bad week to be Ade Edmondson, Nigel Planer and Rik Mayall.

Hindover Hill, Sussex. At current gold prices, the scrap value could probably bail out Greece from its ongoing debt crisis…

The conveyor belt of *Pac-Man* clones continued unabated, although Bug-Byte's new Spectrum version called *Spectres* could be seen as being slightly cheeky after the developer was told in no uncertain terms by Atari just a month or so prior to cease production of its VIC-20 *Pac-Man* game, *Vic Men*.

Atari's all-seeing eye was seemingly targeting anyone who fancied chancing their arm at producing a maze-based power pill gobbling game. Small software house DJL Software was asked to supply copies of both of its *Pac-Man* games: *Zuckman* on the ZX81 and *Z-Man* on the Spectrum. DJL duly obliged.

Oddly, though, things turned out rather well for DJL in the long run; *Zuckman* was considered to be okay by Atari, while *Z-Man* had to be withdrawn and reworked. The newly modified game was then taken on by Atarisoft and released as the official Spectrum version of *Pac-Man*. DJL also went on to develop the Spectrum version of *Ms Pac-Man* for Atarisoft.

When not keeping tabs on the competition, Atari occasionally released its own software, and this month saw *Star Raiders* arrive on the 2600. A first-person space shooter, *Space Raiders* was the first 2600 game to use Atari's Video Touch Pad, which allowed you to access maps and shields, and use the hyperwarp. When we say 'first', we actually mean 'first and only', as no other Atari 2600 game employed the Video Touch Pad controller again.

Imagic also had a new 2600 release with its arcade adventure, *The Riddle Of The Sphinx*. With your quest through Egypt to find the Temple of Ra, you must negotiate thieves and tribesmen, avoid dying of thirst, and make the correct offerings at various temples and pyramids. *The Riddle Of The Sphinx* was a complex yet enjoyable jaunt.

Having enjoyed huge success in American arcades, *Robotron: 2084* finally made its way to the UK. The Williams Electronics coin-op game saw robots taking over the world with the cleansing of most humans from the planet. Thankfully, your human character is a gun-toting superhuman who takes on wave after wave of robots, saving humans along the way.

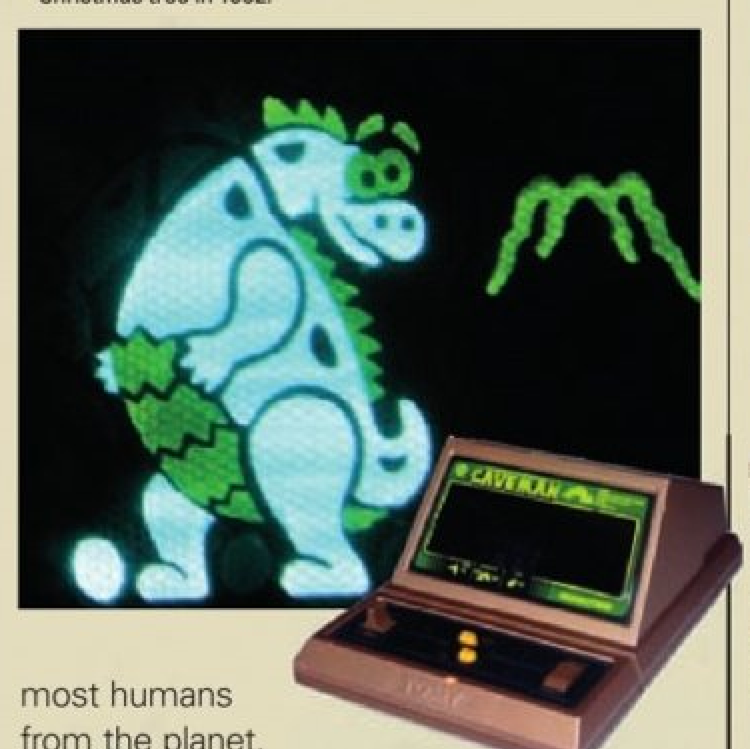
The two-joystick design – one for character movement and one for directional weapon firing – combined with the fast-paced, almost manic gameplay led to *Robotron* becoming a firm favourite in UK arcades too.

Tabletop videogaming at Christmas looked promising with the UK release of *Caveman* by Grandstand, under licence from Tomy. With its eye-burningly bright coloured vacuum fluorescent display, you controlled the little caveman who has to steal dinosaur eggs from under the nose of said creatures. With airborne impediments in the form of pterodactyls and, on later levels, red hot rocks raining down on your furry loincloth from an erupting volcano, the game was simple and fun and destined to become one of Grandstand's bestsellers since *Astro Wars*.

» The Atari 5200 was its new console, yet Atari seemed intent on keeping the 2600 alive.

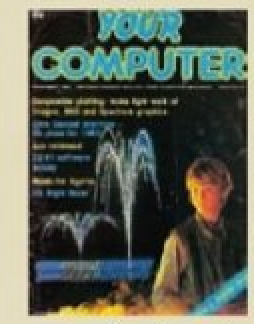


» *Caveman* from Grandstand was to be found under many a Christmas tree in 1982.



THIS MONTH IN…

YOUR COMPUTER



YC interviewed Clive Sinclair, mentioning the contentious deal Acorn won to produce the BBC Micro. Obviously still smarting from not winning the contract, Sinclair states: "If it wasn't for the fact that the BBC allow Acorn to stick a BBC logo on their machines, I don't think they would sell many computers."


CLIVE SINCLAIR: WHATEVER NEXT?
INTERVIEW

POPULAR COMPUTING WEEKLY



PCW interviewed the Tape Duplicating Company and looked at the manufacturing process. A length of tape is over 8,500 feet long and copied at 64 times normal speed, creating 150 copies per minute. It is then spliced into individual shells.


From the Bachelors to Bug-Byte and Back

SINCLAIR USER



SU spoke to Clive Sinclair's right-hand man, senior engineer Jim Westwood. Having worked for Sinclair for 20 years, the unassuming gent played himself down, dismissing his role as simply "fiddling with the components and trying to get things working".


Hiding his light behind Sinclair

BACK TO THE NINETIES



» [Mega Drive] Boogerman's homebrew attack patterns include belching, snot flickage and eggy pumps so thick you can almost taste them…

» The Neo Geo CD was SNK's attempt to bridge the gap between its expensive AES system… and everyone else.



» [Amiga] Mr Blobby. Crinkley Bottom. *Noel's House Party*. Nausea. Vomiting. Say no more…







THE LATEST NEWS FROM AUGUST 1994

SEPTEMBER 1994 – CD-i, 3DO and Neo Geo CD are go, Donkey Kong Country impresses all, Mr Blobby impresses no one and Boogerman floats an air biscuit. Richard Burton digs deep and finds green gold…

It was an interactive month, Philips and Panasonic going head to head with similar machines being released in the UK on the same day. Philips offered gamers the CD-i 450, a slimmed-down version of its CD-i players. The 450 was aimed squarely at the gaming market and, despite an impressive-looking set of specifications, it would not be well received.

Systems live and die by the quality of the software available, and the 450 had some interesting titles to choose from, such as the horror game *The 7th Guest* and *Burn: Cycle*. They were, sadly, few and far between. Even when the big franchises arrived on the 450, they had all their quality sucked out of them, with the three *Zelda* games being particularly lacklustre.



» **Panasonic's 3DO console looked great but bombed big style** mainly due to its big cost.

Could Panasonic's FZ-1 3DO fare better? It had already been in circulation in America for almost a year and reports from there were also mixed. It seemed to be following the pattern of the CD-i by having high-spec hardware but not enough software to tempt new buyers or existing gamers away from Sega and Nintendo.

A major sticking point was that The 3DO Company, created by the founder of Electronic Arts, Trip Hawkins, would take a percentage from each machine sold, with licences being granted to various third-parties to create the hardware. Although the Panasonic was the most recognisable of the 3DO machines, Sanyo and Goldstar also manufactured versions.

The weakness with this arrangement was that the hardware manufacturers had to make a profit from the machines, hence the hefty 3DO price tag of nearly £400. The competition such as Sega and Nintendo were creating lucrative gaming franchises that would offset their much more competitively priced hardware. Ultimately, the asking price for the 3DO rendered the machine a non-starter in the UK.



» [SNES] *Donkey Kong Country* was quite simply one of the best games to grace the SNES.

There was one further CD-based console ready for release. After being previewed a month ago, SNK was officially showing off its Neo Geo CD. Having had great success in Japan with the AES and MVS formats, SNK wanted to introduce a cheaper option.

The Neo Geo CD would have most of the older titles re-released for it as well as the new releases, albeit with a planned delay after the AES. The price was reasonable for a Neo Geo at $450, and the games were much cheaper than the AES versions. Good news if you wanted to play *Metal Slug* or *Twinkle Star Sprites*…

The only real downside to the Neo Geo CD was the game loading times, with the single-speed CD-ROM unit labouring. SNK rectified this a year later with the introduction of the Neo Geo CDZ. It had a bigger cache, albeit still with a single-speed drive, and was, disappointingly, only officially released in Japan. Importers loved



» If you wanna be a Record Breaker… ooooooohhh…

SEPTEMBER 1994 NEWS

28 September saw a passenger ferry travelling from Tallinn, Estonia, to Stockholm sink in very rough conditions in the Baltic Sea. It sank in just five minutes due to a faulty loading bay door that had been taking in water. An independent commission also found fault with the crew. In total 852 people died, half of which were Swedes. The wreck wasn't salvaged but sealed and buried under sand and declared to be an official burial site.

On 24 September, Britain's Lennox Lewis lost his WBC Heavyweight boxing title to American underdog Oliver McCall in just two rounds at Wembley Arena. Lewis walked straight into a hefty McCall right hander and lost by a technical knock-out.

McCall lost the title a year later to Frank Bruno at Wembley Stadium, and Lennox Lewis later regained the then-vacant WBC title in a rematch against McCall, in which the boxer barely fought, didn't defend himself and seemed on the verge of crying. The match was stopped by the referee…

2 September brought the passing of television presenter, dancer, musician and comedian Roy Castle. A talented trumpeter and tap dancer, Castle is remembered predominantly for the BBC children's television show, *Record Breakers*, where guests – and occasionally Castle himself – would attempt to break world records. It ran for an impressive 30 series, with Castle in charge as host for over 20 years. Dedication – that's what you need…

it, though, as just like the Philips CD-i and 3DO, it had no regional lockout.

Rare revealed tantalising tasters of its new Super Nintendo game, *Donkey Kong Country*. It looked to be a bog-standard side-scrolling platform game in which you battle through 40 levels, gathering your stolen banana stash. You could play as either Donkey Kong or his nephew Diddy Kong and utilise many supporting characters, like Rambi the rhino, as modes of transport and for finding bonus games.

However, bog standard it certainly was not. *Donkey Kong Country* had magnificently detailed characters and backgrounds, all splendidly animated. Not that surprising when you consider that Rare had bought a Silicon Graphics workstation to produce graphics for the game. The result was undeniably brilliant, with many in the press stating that you will not have seen graphics like these on the SNES.

Interplay hoped to get its new Mega Drive game, *Boogerman*, out in time for Christmas. With the body-fluid-based weaponry that Boogerman possessed, it was sure to keep giggly younger players and 30-somethings going through their second puberty very happy.



» [Amiga] Looks and tastes like *Sensible Soccer* but is more like a low-fat version of the king of football games.

Boogerman is essentially a standard platform game, with some excellent animation. The selling point was the hero's attacks, which involved belching, farting and flicking snot at enemies. And for a temporary jet pack, Boogerman could expel an extended fart. Even if the content didn't float your boat, the game was polished and well executed, and it deservedly received good reviews from the press when released just before Christmas. Parp!

Still, it couldn't be as offensive as Millennium's new platform game on the PC and Amiga: *Mr Blobby*. The sponge-suited slapstick character from the BBC's *Noel's House Party* television show was flavour of the month and, as such, the game appeared to be a quick cash-in. It was poor but sold well enough to keep Crinkley Bottom in gunge for years…

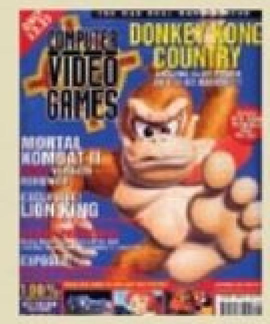
Ocean and Electronic Arts revealed that a deal had been struck for Ocean to convert six console games to the Amiga, which would include classics such as *Jungle Strike* and the downright stinky *Shaq Fu*. As part of the deal, Ocean would also be developing several of EA's SNES titles.

Croatian developer Croteam announced that it was close to completing its football game, *Football Glory*. Published by Black Legend on the Amiga, the game at first glance bore a remarkable resemblance to the all-conquering *Sensible Soccer*. Graphically it was virtually identical, but the Croatian coders had added neat finishing touches such as streakers, stretcher-bearers and skidmarks on the pitch after a sliding tackle. We suspect Sensible Software was creating a few skidmarks after seeing the similarity

However, despite the bells and whistles, *Football Glory* lacked the playability that kept *Sensible Soccer* at the top of the table.

THIS MONTH IN…

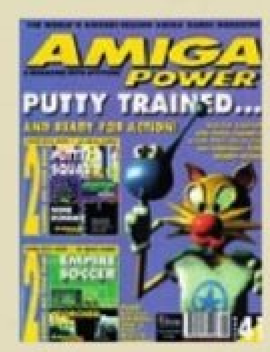
COMPUTER & VIDEO GAMES



C&VG was excited by the release of *Mortal Kombat II* by Acclaim. The SNES and Mega Drive versions received 96% and 97% respectively, with the reviewer proudly declaring it "the most perfect coin-op conversion ever". It wasn't that good…



AMIGA POWER



AP pointed out that retro gaming was in fashion, concluding that "old games work because most of the games had truly good ideas" and stating that "in 1980 it was hard to mask dodgy gameplay with flashy graphics when the flashy graphics consisted of a letter V firing full stops at invading letter Ds". True.



SUPER PLAY



Super Play fell in love with Capcom's SNES version of *Super Street Fighter II: The New Challengers* on import. Scoring 96%, the review stated that "it was a phenomenon and a way of life". It wasn't that good…

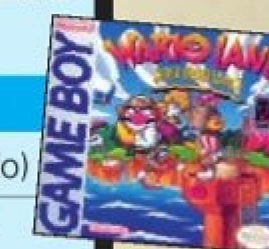


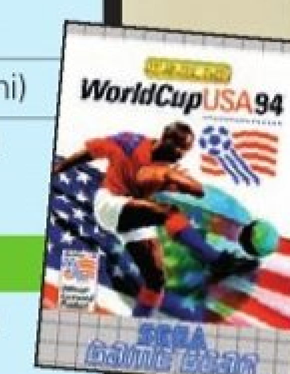
CHARTS

SEPTEMBER 1994

GAME BOY

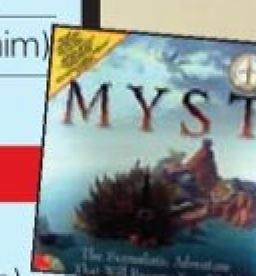
1 Wario Land (Nintendo)
2 World Cup USA '94 (US Gold)
3 The Legend Of Zelda: Link's Awakening (Nintendo)
4 Konami Golf (Konami)
5 Super Mario Land 2 (Nintendo)





GAME GEAR

1 World Cup USA '94 (US Gold)
2 Aladdin (Virgin Games)
3 Ren & Stimpy (Sega)
4 Mortal Kombat (Acclaim)
5 NBA Jam (Acclaim)



MACINTOSH

1 Myst (Brøderbund Software)
2 SimCity 2000 (Maxis Software)
3 SimCity 2000 Scenarios Vol 1: Great Disasters (Maxis Software)
4 Xplora 1: Peter Gabriel's Secret World (MacPlay)
5 PGA Tour Golf 2 (Electronic Arts)

MUSIC

1 Saturday Night (Whigfield)
2 Love Is All Around (Wet Wet Wet)
3 The Rhythm Of The Night (Corona)
4 Confide In Me (Kylie Minogue)
5 Endless Love (Luther Vandross & Maria Carey)




New game..
The door is locked...



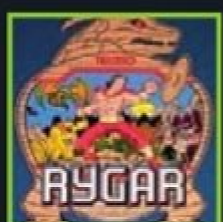
RETROBATE PROFILE

» **NAME:** STEPHEN WESTWOOD
» **JOINED:** 27 JULY 2011
» **LOCATION:** UK
» **OCCUPATION:** NOT GIVEN
» **FAVE GAME SYSTEM:** ARCADE

Dragonia

THE SPECCY'S SKYRIM?

#46



» ZX SPECTRUM
» ASTROS PRODUCTIONS
» 1988

Remember the days before the internet? Before Ebay, Paypal and ordering everything online? To be honest, I don't know how I survived! I ordered this game with a cheque written by my mum, having seen an advert for it in *Sinclair User* magazine. It was released by a small independent software house that I'd never heard of. I'd not seen a review but the screenshots really caught my attention. A massive centaur, colourful, beautiful scenery… amazing! Plus it was 128k-only, which made me feel superior as I had an original 128k Speccy.

There was something about the scene at the time, the fact that there were so many games out there, some of which were quite obscure, that gave finds like this a kind of mythology; an 'I'm the only one in the world playing this' feel. Or was that just me?! And for a fantasy adventure game like this that feel was really enhanced.

You control your adventurer, walking slowly through a wonderful flip-screen world with pleasant music playing, looking for things to do. You can pick things up, look at them, and use them. Most importantly, you find scrolls with letters on, and if you find a special place then you can use those letters to write spells. I found that bit too hard so wrote off for a hint sheet with the spells on – that was invaluable, and not really cheating!

To stop you in your quest there are zombies and wraiths that walk set paths. You can listen out for their footsteps and it can get genuinely scary, as when they arrive on screen the music dramatically and darkly changes and you need to get out of there! There are also massive mythical beasts that stand in your way. They don't hurt you but block your path until you conjure the correct spell.

I don't know how well this game did, but it really did deserve attention. I spent many, many hours on it, drawing maps and searching for new places. It seemed to be massive and had a great feel to it. I never did complete it though… I think perhaps I suddenly got old! *

Want to appear in the magazine? Be sure to upload your classic profiles at www.retrogamer.net

THE MAKING OF

METAL SLUG





Metal Slug is an arcade classic that was ported across a multitude of formats and spawned numerous sequels, with a legacy that forever endures. In a world exclusive and requiring two Japanese translators, John Szczepaniak speaks with Kazuma Kujo, formerly of Irem, and discovers that its creation was almost happenstance

Although now easily available thanks to several mainstream re-releases, *Metal Slug* has long been a focal point for the hardcore. Developed at a time when 3D was usurping sprites both in arcades and at home, it showcased what was still possible with 2D. It was also developed for SNK's Neo Geo hardware, which epitomised rich and cool. Even when ported elsewhere, such as to Sega's Saturn, it required an additional RAM cartridge to function, reinforcing the fact that it was special. Whether in arcades or as a console port, *Metal Slug* is something that today remains aesthetically and functionally beautiful.

Yet for a long time we didn't really know who made it. While *Metal Slug* has become synonymous with SNK, it was actually developed by the mysterious Nazca Corporation, an offshoot of Irem that was later absorbed into SNK, and a company that many know little about. It's also hard to even get interviews via SNK Playmore, as many of the original developers no longer work there. Further complicating things is that the original series is credited only to a series of mysterious pseudonyms: Kawai, MeeHer, Akio, Susumu, Cannon/Max-D, Tomo, Kuichin, Andy, Seeker and Hamachan. Also, with the exception of a transcript in the *Metal Slug Anthology* release and a surreal Q&A with MeeHer on *Metal Slug* Database (**mslugdb.com**), there don't appear to be any

THE MAKING OF





IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** SNK
- » **DEVELOPER:** NAZCA CORPORATION
- » **RELEASED:** 1996
- » **PLATFORM:** NEO GEO
- » **GENRE:** SHOOTER



METAL SLUG RELATIONS: GEOSTORM

SOMETHING PEOPLE AREN'T aware of, or perhaps don't want to admit, is that for all the praise lavished on *Metal Slug*, Irem's own *GeoStorm* (aka *Gunforce II*) is, in some instances, a demonstrably better game. Although Kujo has disavowed any association with *GeoStorm*, it predates *Metal Slug* and plays like its prototype, albeit with several additional cool features. By Kujo's own admission, though, it was made by colleagues who later worked on *Metal Slug*. It's impossible to verify specifically who, unfortunately, since completion of *GeoStorm* loops you back to stage one, without so much as a credits screen.

The game itself is fantastic, bearing not only a similarity to *Metal Slug* but also *Gunstar Heroes*, with the ability to hang from walls and ceilings while firing at enemies from all directions using not one but two guns. There's also an assortment of outlandish vehicles to ride, more action than a Jerry Bruckheimer film marathon, and a bombastically awesome heavy metal soundtrack. By all accounts *GeoStorm* should have taken the crown. The reason it didn't is likely because it was never ported to home systems, whereas *Metal Slug*'s popularity was buoyed by the Neo Geo home market and later ports and sequels.

interviews with the team – at least not in English.

A breakthrough was made when previously unpublished excerpts from an interview with Irem's Kazuma Kujo were leaked on the old Insert Credit forums. Detailing his background, Kujo revealed that he wrote the original concept for *In The Hunt* (aka *Kaitei Daisensou*) at Irem and oversaw its development, later helping to form Nazca and taking charge of the *Metal Slug* project. But to fully understand *Metal Slug*'s creation, you need to go way back, since in many ways it's an evolution of scrolling shmups such as Irem's *R-Type*, rather than traditional run-and-guns like *Contra*.

After joining Irem, Kujo's first job was helping playtest *R-Type II*, though he wasn't involved in design. His first creative role was on *In The Hunt*, which was released in arcades in 1993. It was an extremely detailed 2D shmup featuring submarines, a simultaneous two-player option, and the ability to manually move the play area forwards.

All of this, according to Kujo, owes something to the vast range of other shooters available, including Irem's own *R-Type*: "The plan to make a 'shooting game' had already been decided, but also, at the same time, I had decided to make the game for two people who could play simultaneously. However, I did not like that in shooting games there was forced scrolling, so the screen would just keep on moving even if one of the players was out of the game. Also, most shooting games were set in outer space, and I wanted to make something different."

It certainly was different, with a tremendous amount of personality



» [Neo Geo] One of the coolest parts of *Metal Slug* is the detailed death animations. Look at that soldier BURN!

> One day I was dozing on a park bench near a fountain, and, hearing the sounds of water, I had an inspiration

in the submarines you controlled, enhanced by detailed animation for everything on screen. The inspiration for the submarines may come as a surprise, though. When asked, Kujo laughs: "Well, for a long time I could not come up with any good ideas, and for about a month I would sneak out of the office every day to think in the park. One day I was dozing on a park bench near a fountain, and, hearing the sounds of water, I had an inspiration: 'Water… like a submarine!' And so I decided to make the game using submarines."

From here, things get complicated, since the following year Irem released *GeoStorm* (aka *Gunforce II*) in arcades. This played and looked like a prototype *Metal Slug*, with a visual style similar to the preceding *In The Hunt* but containing no developer credits. Several other Irem games, such as *Undercover Cops*, also had a similar style to what would later be seen in *Metal Slug*. We ask Kujo if he was involved with any of these, specifically *GeoStorm*. "I was not involved in those," he replies. "My colleagues made them."

Rattling off the names, we ask if he remembers people such as Akio, Susumu, MeeHer and Hamachan, plus who they were and why no one was named. He explains: "Yes, I remember them. At that time, Japanese game companies were very cloistered, like a closed society, and to announce their real names was prohibited. Therefore, we used our nicknames instead." Unfortunately, he refuses to give up their identities.

Equally as clandestine is Nazca itself, which was allegedly formed



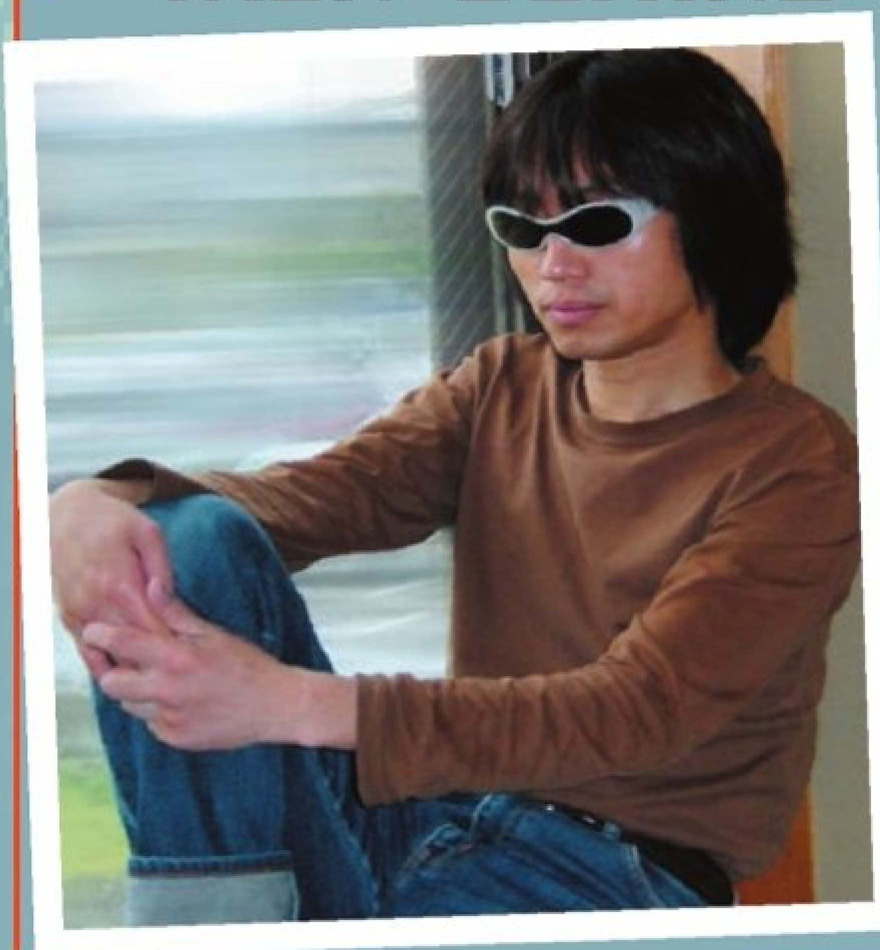
» Hayao Miyazaki's *Daydream Note* is a book collecting together some of his fantastic watercolour manga, which influenced the Nazca artists on *Metal Slug*.



» [Neo Geo] Later on there's a double boss encounter, so bring a friend if you can to share the fight.



MEN BEHIND THE MYTH



NAME: KAZUMA KUJO
AGE: DOESN'T LIKE TO SAY
HAIR: BROWN
EYES: SUNGLASSES
BORN: OSAKA, JAPAN
BLOOD: AB
LIKES: HORSE RACING, SHOGI, MAHJONG

To date, only Kazuma Kujo has come forward and admitted to being part of the original Nazca team for *Metal Slug*. Otherwise he's best known for the *Disaster Report* series (aka *Zettai Zetsumei Toshi*), *Steambot Chronicles* and *R-Type Final*. Kujo had always officially been employed at Irem, until recently when he left to form Granzella. His departure came after Irem's cancellation of *Zettai Zetsumei Toshi 4: Summer Memories* and *Bumpy Trot 2*.

Other key Sluggers include pixel artists Akio (sprites and animation) and Susumu (backgrounds). These two worked on several Irem games and the *Metal Slug* series until *Metal Slug 3*, which explains the stylistic similarities with Irem's earlier works. The lead designer on the *Metal Slug* series is MeeHer, who was also the main guy on *Undercover Cops* at Irem. Further proof of *Metal Slug*'s all-star team is that programmer Hamachan was formerly at Capcom, having worked on *Street Fighter Alpha*.

from Irem as a result of the company's inactivity. Kujo confirms this: "It is true. Nazca was founded with around 15 employees from Irem. [At that time] I served at Nazca." Of course, he has officially only ever been employed by Irem, implying that his role on *Metal Slug* was a case of moonlighting.

If *In The Hunt* was an evolution of galactic shmups like *R-Type, Metal Slug* started as a direct successor, albeit with tanks replacing submarines. It isn't until towards the end of the interview, when we ask Kujo about what challenged the team most, that this bombshell is dropped: "The most difficult point was significantly changing the configuration of the player. Originally, the combat vehicle was the only character you controlled. However, when we did location tests, we did not get a good response from customers playing. So, we changed the game so that the soldiers were the central characters you controlled."

When asked about other changes, Kujo's memory is blurred: "I think some parts of the stages were remade, but I cannot remember it clearly." However, the team transcript in the *Metal Slug Anthology* reveals that after changing the characters, other things had to be altered: "In order to create and release one game, tons of ideas or designs are born and destroyed. In the first title, there was a stage [on which] we had to redraw almost half of the background graphic because it ended up not matching our direction as development progressed."

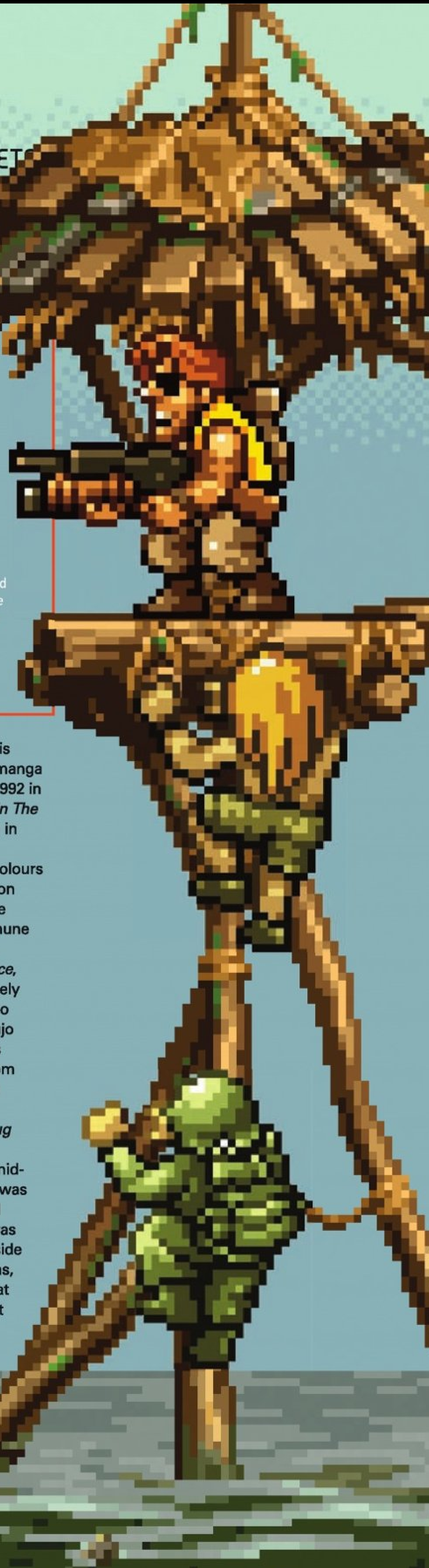
It's astonishing to think such a radical change had to be made after the game was already complete and being location tested. Unsurprisingly, the personality of the eponymous Metal Slug tank was well established. The *Anthology* transcript reveals that the team had found inspiration in several sources: "Well… We want to say, 'It's an original idea and we didn't get any inspiration from anything!', but actually we came up with the design from various manga, animation, movies and other places."

We show this to Kujo and ask for elaboration. His candid response should please Studio Ghibli fans: "Oh, there was definitely other influences. We were very much inspired by Hayao Miyazaki's book, *Daydream Note*."

Curious readers should track this down, since it collects various manga by Miyazaki, first published in 1992 in which form it likely influenced *In The Hunt* and *Metal Slug*, and again in 1997 with additions.

Viewing the exquisite watercolours in *Daydream Note*, the inspiration is clear, but at the same time we can't help but wonder if Masamune Shirow's design for Bonaparte, the tank in *Dominion: Tank Police*, also played a role. Although freely admitting the influence of Hayao Miyazaki, the response from Kujo regarding Masamune Shirow is surprising: "It was not taken from *Dominion: Tank Police*. I cannot answer about this any more."

To appreciate what *Metal Slug* represents, you also need to understand the context of the mid-Nineties, when the PlayStation was the dominant home format and SNK's ageing MVS hardware was starting to look obsolete alongside its competitors. As Kujo explains, support for an old arcade format was simply because that's what they knew: "We were making





» [Neo Geo] Although *Metal Slug* can be played solo, it's most fun with a friend.



» [Neo Geo] Right from the start, *Metal Slug* impresses, with this ruined submarine beached in the jungle.

THE MAKING OF



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

IN THE HUNT
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1993

GEOSTORM
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1994

METAL SLUG 2 (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1998

METAL SLUG RELATIONS: IN THE HUNT

LIKE *GEOSTORM*, THIS fantastic side-scrolling shooter also features beautiful *Metal Slug*-style visuals that ooze detail and personality. *In The Hunt* was Kujo's first creative project at Irem and, as he reveals in the feature, was a big influence on *Metal Slug*. With *In The Hunt*, the action is entirely in-vehicle, which was the direction *Metal Slug* was originally going to take before location testing persuaded the team to add soldiers.

Set in a post-apocalyptic world that has flooded due to the melting of the polar icecaps, your mission is to topple the organisation responsible for intentionally causing the disaster. Through its preparation for the great flood and creation of monstrous-looking biomechanical weapons, the enemy has gained control of the drenched world, and it falls to you, as part of a rebel force, to end their tyrannical reign from inside a chubby submarine. Gameplay-wise, *In The Hunt* shares similarities with the early Irem games *Mr Heli*, *R-Type* spin-off *Cosmic Cop* (aka *Armed Police Unit Gallop*) and *Sqoon*, an early shooter for the NES that also stars a submarine. Its militaristic themes, stunning sprite work, giant bosses and intense gameplay, though, are pure *Metal Slug*.



games for game centres – or arcades, as you call them – when we were in Irem. So that is why we made games for Neo Geo at Nazca, since that was the hardware of game centres."

Using SNK's hardware resulted in *Metal Slug* having a beautiful and extremely ambitious 2D form, despite being released at a time when everyone was obsessed with 3D. Long-time fans who believe that this would have been an artistic choice may be disappointed to discover this wasn't the director's intention. Kujo explains that, after *In The Hunt*, his interests were no longer in sprites: "I did not specifically mean to make 2D games. It was just because the game machine, Neo Geo, that we were working on at that time was 2D hardware. After I left Nazca I made *R-Type Delta* and other 3D games."

Of course, nothing can detract from the genuine artistry of *Metal Slug*'s visuals, and Kujo confirms the amount of work that was needed, though he reveals something surprising: "Our artists took quite a long time and worked very hard to make the graphic designs. However, we made the 2D animations for those graphics at a menacing speed. We needed a lot of energy to make them, but we made those graphics much quicker than you imagine."

The *Anthology* transcript backs this up, explaining how delegation of the workload allowed for faster completion: "Basic art and animation moves for the enemy characters were planned and designed mostly by the chief designer exclusively. That is the big reason for consistency throughout the series. After the basics were done, they were sent to other staff to put actual movement and animation patterns."

Asking about Kujo's favourite part of *Metal Slug* reveals an interesting design decision: "I like the fact that the central characters, the soldiers, can only shoot directly upward and not diagonally. We spent a lot of thought on this, and I believe this is the way to do an action shooter!"

The inability to fire diagonally when on foot, compared to run-and-guns like *Contra*, is what mechanically ties *Metal Slug* to traditional shmups like *In The Hunt*, since the restricted vertical and horizontal shooting conveys a unique feeling. Although the heavy machine gun can technically fire at an angle, this is haphazard and only the result of its animation swing – for genuine oblique firing, you need to enter the Metal Slug tank, which acts as a power-up.

As for the rest of the team, the *Anthology* transcript offers insight: "We really like the shotgun because the shooting range is so short that you have to take a chance to get closer to enemies to take advantage of the destructive power. We also like the Morden soldiers because their programming is very complicated, but they are beaten so easily."

Before parting, we ask Kujo if he's played any of the sequels and what he thinks of them, since he left the series after the first game and the rest of the original team only remained intact until the third instalment. "They sound good," he admits, "especially the part where you can ride camels, but I don't know because I haven't played the sequels much."

Special thanks to Kazuaki Yazawa and Yuko Ogawara for their translating help, Samuel Melzner for his assistance, and Richard Ashmore of the *Metal Slug* Sprite Database for letting us use his awesome sprites.

» [Neo Geo] The excellent *In The Hunt* was Kazuma Kujo's first creative endeavour and went on to influence *Metal Slug*'s development.



Originally the vehicle was the only character. However, during location tests we did not get a good response



» Did Masamune Shirow's designs for the Bonaparte tank influence Metal Slug's design? Kujo says no.





A BRIEF HISTORY OF METAL SLUG



METAL SLUG 2 [1998]

Nazca's sequel to *Metal Slug* was a case of bigger, faster, more. It added several new weapons, including the laser and fire bombs, allowed characters to transform into mummies or obese versions of themselves, featured a number of supporting characters and introduced the new slugs: the Slugnoid, Camel Slug and Slug Flyer. While it suffers from large bouts of slowdown, it remains a solid sequel.



METAL SLUG: 1ST MISSION [1999]

Marco Rossi's first handheld adventure gets virtually everything right. The levels are created for bite-sized chunks of play and there's some great animation, while the varied level design ensures that you never get bored. We're big fans of the new shmup sections, but even without these, this is so full of charm that it's hard not to be impressed.



METAL SLUG X [1999]

Metal Slug X is generally considered to be the true sequel to *Metal Slug*. In addition to fixing the slowdown that plagued *Metal Slug 2*, it features numerous tweaks to the core gameplay. The most obvious is that many stages now take place at different times of day, and it also introduces several new weapons, including the Drop Shot, Super Grenade and Iron Lizard, and gives you access to the Golden Metal Slug.



METAL SLUG: 2ND MISSION [2000]

SNK's handheld sequel dutifully built upon the elements that made the original so enjoyable and is a far better game. Graphics have been enhanced, while the controls are even tighter than in the original. There are a large number of stages to conquer, various routes to discover, and 100 hostages to free. A great sequel that improves on the original in every way.



METAL SLUG 3 [2000]

For many fans, *Metal Slug 3* is the pinnacle of the series, and it's not hard to see why. Its levels are far larger and feature multiple routes, allowing for plenty of diversity before you reach the level's boss. While no new weapons appear, there's a large number of new Slugs, including the Slug Driller, the vulcan cannon-powered Elephant Slug and the Slug Copter. A suitably epic run-and-gun.



METAL SLUG 4 [2002]

Metal Slug 4 was the first game in the series to be created by an outside developer, and while it's an enjoyable effort, it's also a rather safe one. The blueprint for the levels is very similar to the early games, with a bigger emphasis on soldiers and tanks, meaning those who enjoyed the supernatural and sci-fi elements of *3* will be disappointed. An enjoyable romp, but not a huge improvement on previous games.



METAL SLUG 5 [2003]

The biggest addition to *Metal Slug 5* is easily the slide-dash. Otherwise, it's an interesting mish-mash of past ideas, with some levels copying the structure of *Metal Slug 3* and a further dampening down of the supernatural elements. Three new Slugs are also introduced, ranging from the superpowered Slug Gunner to the weird Spider Slug. Like *4*, it again feels a little by-the-numbers, but it's still good fun.



METAL SLUG ADVANCE [2004]

We really like *Metal Slug Advance*, and not just because it features a card system. Unlike previous instalments, you now have a life bar to replace the multiple lives of past games that can be replenished by collecting the food scattered about each stage. There are two new Slug variants, 100 cards to collect, and the whole package is perfectly suited to gaming on the go.





METAL SLUG [2006]

It was a brave move to create a 3D version of *Metal Slug*. Sadly, the gamble by SNK Playmore didn't pay off and the end result is a disappointing addition to the franchise. The ability to upgrade weapons and the introduction of skill points are certainly nice touches, but *Metal Slug* is let down by lacklustre level design, uninteresting Slugs and ugly, super-deformed versions of the characters.



METAL SLUG 6 [2006]

One of our favourite aspects of *Metal Slug 6* is the ability to carry and switch between two power-ups. We also like the fact that it makes more of the rebel-Martian alliance, which featured in *2*, *X* and *3*. It adds some fun new Slugs, and the available characters all play differently to each other. What we're less impressed with, though, is the average level design and infuriatingly tough difficulty level.

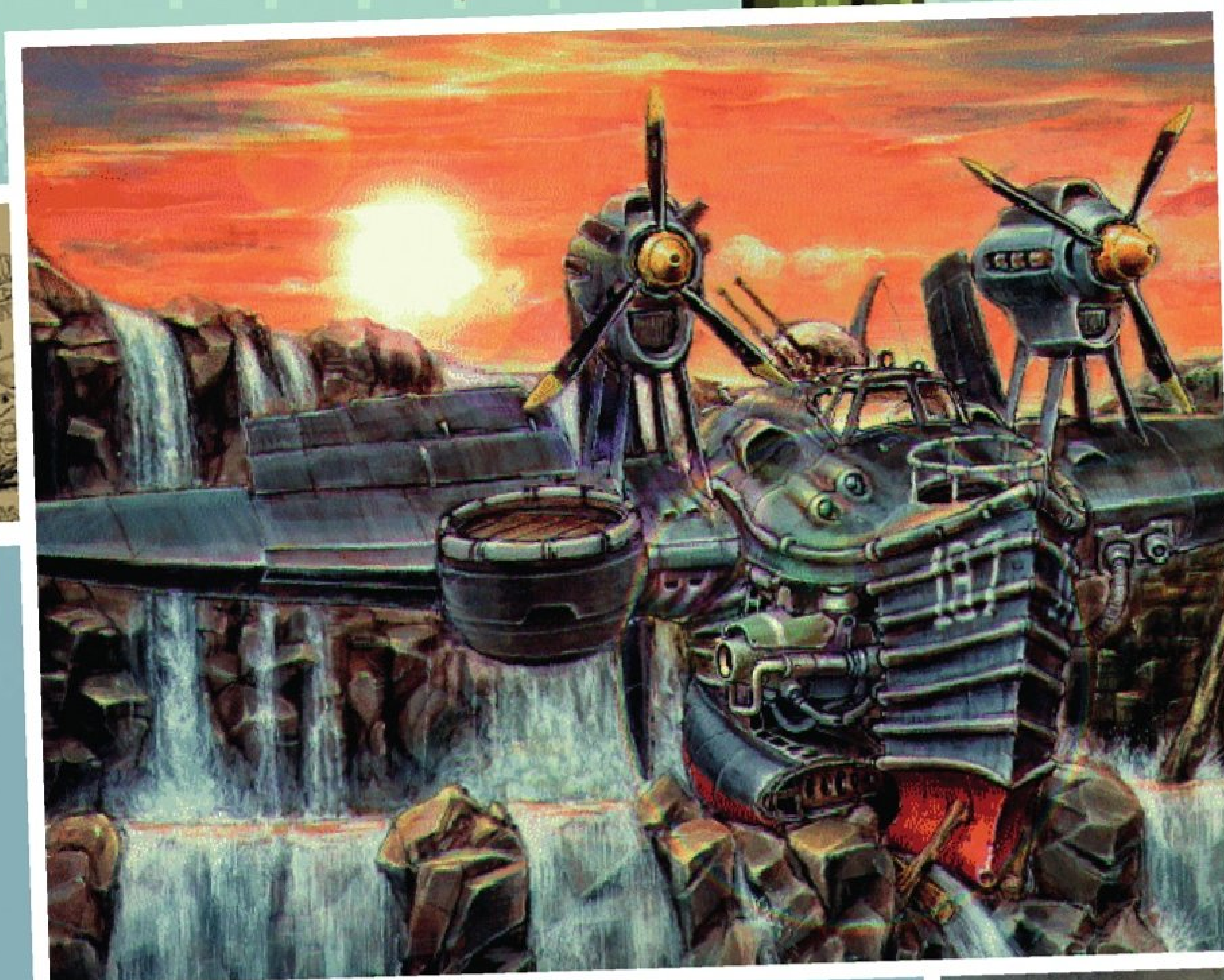


METAL SLUG 7 [2008]

While it's not as streamlined nor as enjoyable as past handheld iterations, *Metal Slug 7* is still good fun. It improves on many of the mechanics introduced in *Metal Slug 6* and features far tighter level design. Like many of the later games, it's built up a love/hate relationship with fans of the series, but it's definitely worth seeking out. An enhanced version, *Metal Slug XX*, was released on the PSP and Xbox Live Arcade.

THE MAKING OF





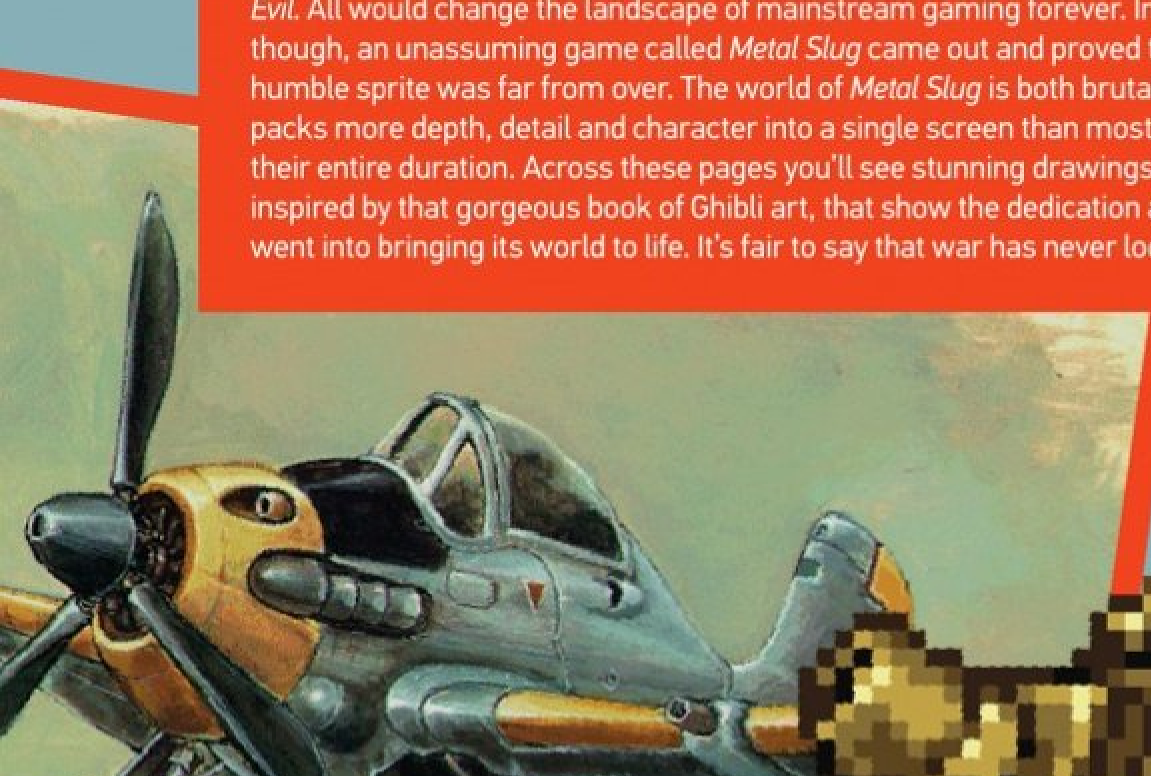


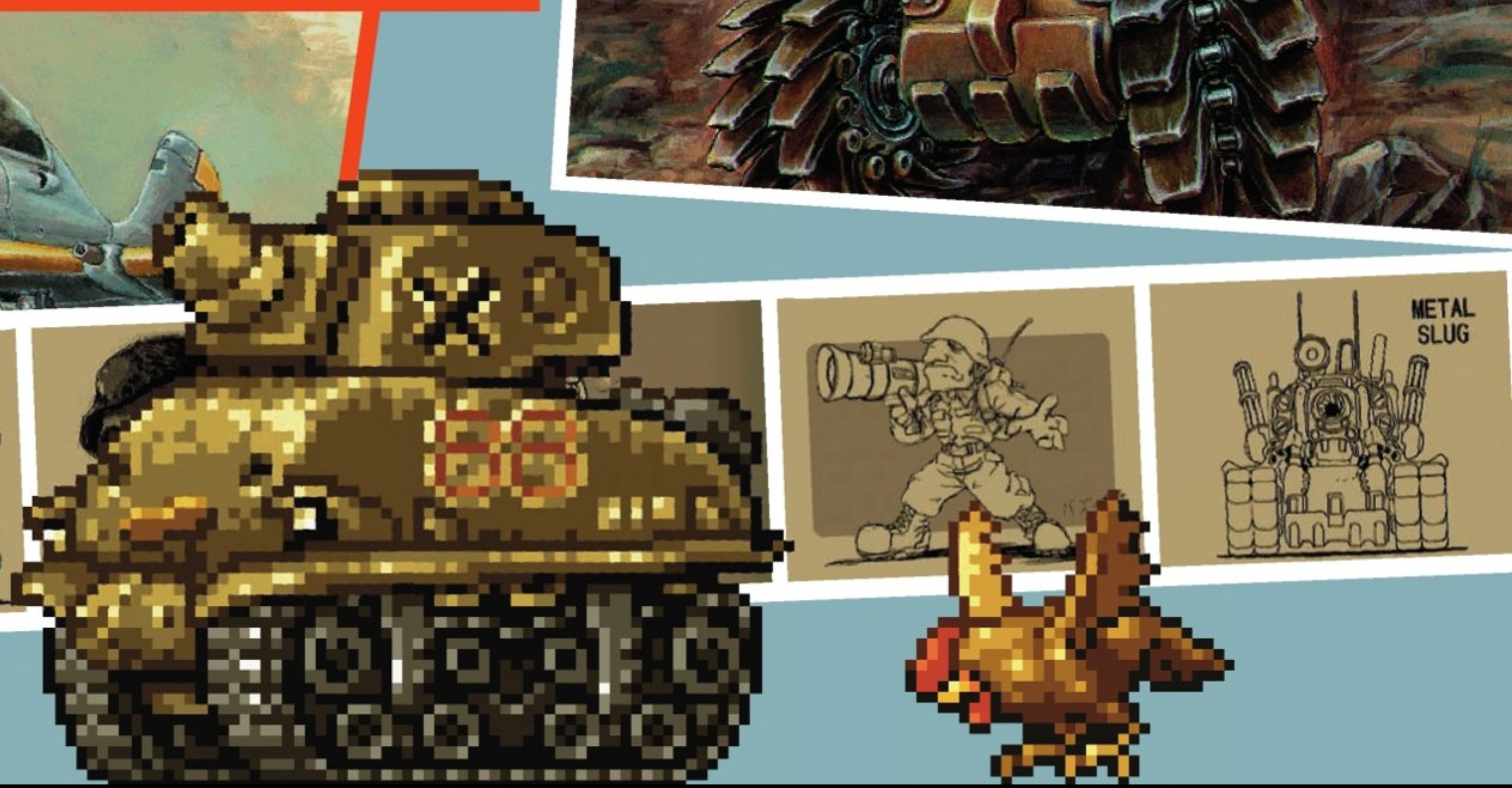


THE ART OF METAL SLUG

IN 1996, THREE-DIMENSIONAL gaming took a giant leap forward with the releases of *Quake*, *Duke Nukem 3D*, *Super Mario 64*, *Tomb Raider* and *Resident Evil*. All would change the landscape of mainstream gaming forever. In this same year, though, an unassuming game called *Metal Slug* came out and proved that the life of the humble sprite was far from over. The world of *Metal Slug* is both brutal and beautiful, and packs more depth, detail and character into a single screen than most games manage in their entire duration. Across these pages you'll see stunning drawings and concept art, inspired by that gorgeous book of Ghibli art, that show the dedication and hard work that went into bringing its world to life. It's fair to say that war has never looked so beautiful.







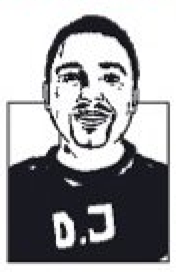



– TOP SECRET –
SV-002
METAL SLUG
MARCO
TARMA
General
MORDEN

CLASSIC GAMING ON A BUDGET

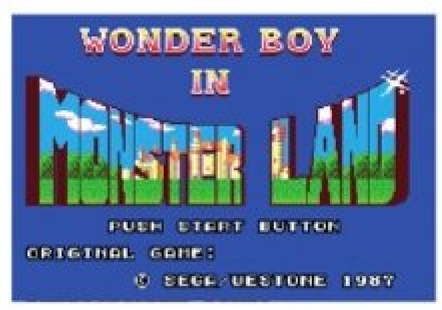
CHEAP AS CHIPS

WONDER BOY IN MONSTER LAND



***Wonder Boy In Monster Land* never gets the love it deserves, which is a great pity, as it sets up most of the groundwork for the excellent *Wonder Boy III: The Dragon's Trap*.**

After pleasing arcade-goers with *Wonder Boy*, developer Westone took the series is a completely different direction. Set 11 years after the events in *Wonder Boy*, the peace of Wonder Land is disrupted by the fire-breathing MEKA Dragon, which quickly enslaves the people and villages and creates Monster Land. Wonder Land once again turns to Wonder Boy, who, armed with light armour and his trusty sword, sets off in hot pursuit.



INFO

- **SYSTEM:** MASTER SYSTEM
- **RELEASED:** 1988
- **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** ARCADE, COMMODORE 64, FAMICOM, PC ENGINE, AMSTRAD CPC, ZX SPECTRUM, AMIGA, ATARI ST

The gameplay of *Monster Land* is significantly different to *Wonder Boy*, as it's slower paced and features a large number of RPG mechanics. There are still platforms to negotiate, monsters to kill and many bosses to defeat, but everything feels far more measured and deliberate.

Shops are littered throughout Monster Land and, when Wonder Boy enters them, he can buy a huge variety of items. Swords, shields and different types of armour bolster his strength and defence; boots enable him to jump higher and further, while a variety of power-ups, from tornados to fireballs, greatly boost the power of his ranged attacks.

Additional shops include taverns, where you can buy a drink and get information about a level, hospitals that refill both your energy and timer, and fortune-tellers who give you clues about future events. As the game progresses, some proprietors take additionally cautionary measures and either hide the signs above their doors or even hide their shops completely, causing you to investigate every unusual-looking platform in the game in case it hides something.

Bosses are also hidden behind doors, and get tougher and tougher as the quest progresses. Attack patterns get nasty in the later stages of the game (the bouncing knights are a real pain) but careful movements and a steady hand are normally enough to get you through most battles. Get the key that the boss drops and you can move onto the next stage.

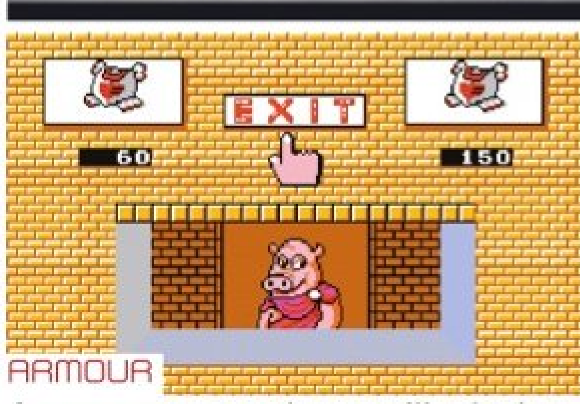




While *Wonder Boy In Monster Land* was converted to a number of different systems, Sega's Master System conversion was easily one of the best versions. Bright and colourful and with tight controls, it was an entertaining release for Sega's 8-bit machine, which definitely benefited from having little competition. Most Master System games were either straightforward platformers or RPGs and very rarely mixed the two genres, so a game like *Wonder Boy In Monster Land* was a real treat. Thank goodness Sega decided to stick with the adventure route for *Dragon's Trap*, instead of giving Master System owners the ropey arcade port that Mega Drive owners ended up with.

SHOP 'TIL YOU DROP

The wonder of upgrading your quest equipment



ARMOUR

Armour ensures that you'll take less damage. Useful, when you consider how dangerous Monster Land is.



BOOTS

There are different types of boots, and they enable you to reach inaccessible areas.



TAVERN

Despite his youth, Wonder Boy has no problem getting a pint. Taverns offer information about a level.



FORTUNE TELLER

Offers information about future stages. Later shops and people are well hidden; pay heed to the clues.



MAGIC

The power-ups all handle differently, so make sure you're equipped with the right tool.



SHIELDS

These handy shields will soak up projectiles, protecting your precious health.

» [Master System] Underwater stages look gorgeous and are filled with all manner of dangerous denizens.





IN THE KNOW

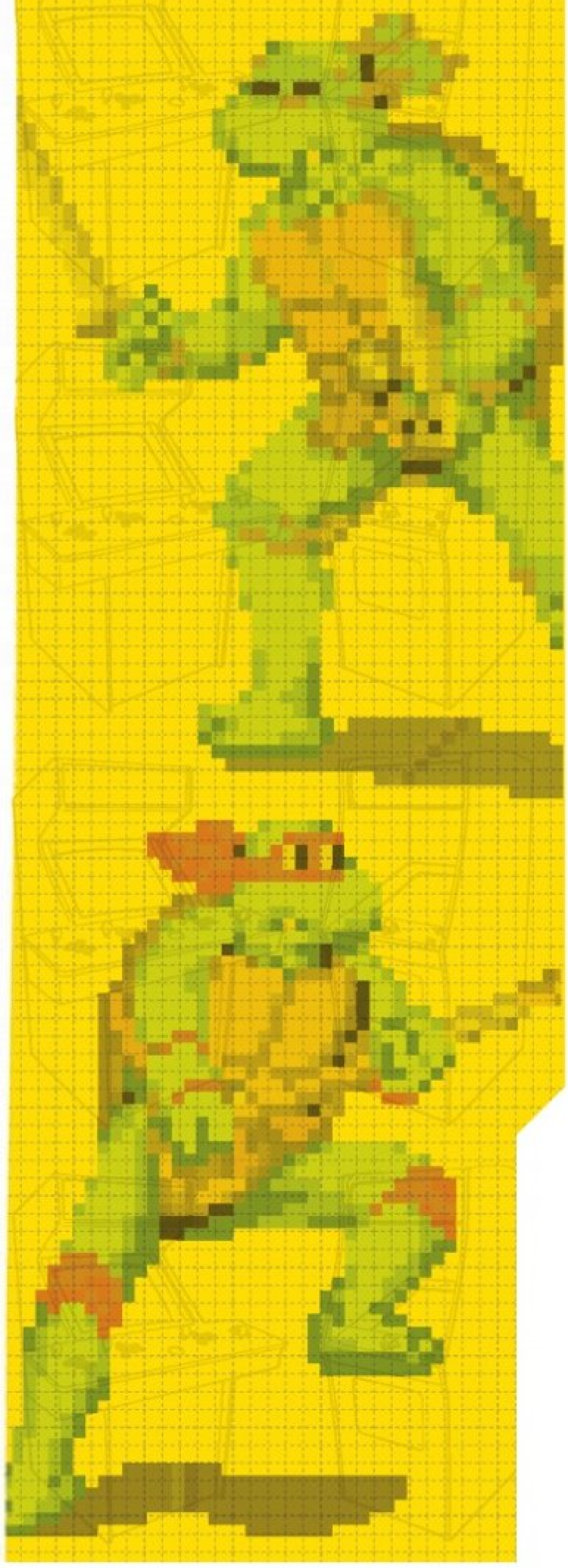
- **» Name:** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
- **» Released:** 1989
- **» Publisher:** Konami
- **» Developer:** Konami
- **» Price:** £150-300
- **» By The Same Developer:** *Gradius, Contra*



COIN-OP CAPERS

#12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles

We take a definitive look back at one of the Eighties' most popular arcade games. Tonight, Martyn Carroll dines on turtle soup







T*eenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* is a perennially popular franchise (and yes, they were indeed 'Ninja Turtles', not mere 'Hero Turtles' – the change of name due to some silly censorship issues in parts of Europe that we'll pretend never happened). Just when you think it's finally died a death, a new comic, TV series, toy line, videogame or movie reminds us all that those reptilian rapscallions who shout 'Cowabunga!' and scoff pizza have been around for over 25 years, and will probably be around for 25 more.

But no matter how long *TMNT* remains in favour, it will never be more popular that it was in 1990. This was the year when the phenomenon reached its peak and *TMNT* became an unstoppable force. The animated series was playing heavily on TV, the first movie was doing big business at the box office, and the tune 'Turtle Power' by pretend rappers Partners in Kryme was topping charts everywhere. And of course there was the *TMNT* coin-op from Konami, which was released in 1989 but by 1990 was established in arcades the world over.

If you'd been suckered into the *Turtles* craze then it was simply impossible to resist Konami's arcade game. Based on the animated series, it was a scrolling beat-'em-up where you went up against evil Shredder's army of Foot Soldiers and various bosses including Rocksteady, Bebop, Krang and the Shred-head himself. It was slick, fast and fun, with plenty of humour and jokes for fans, yet easily the game's finest feature was its co-op play. Some versions of the cab offered support for four players, allowing you and three mates to each take control of a Turtle and fight together.

The move list was pretty standard for this type of game. Bashing the attack button would result in a simple combo move, with your Turtle performing an impromptu back kick should you be approached from behind. Hitting the jump button followed by attack would perform one of three moves depending on your height: a flying kick (low), a diving kick (mid) or a vertical weapon attack (high). Finally, hitting attack and jump together would unleash your Turtle's special move. Leonardo, Michelangelo and Donatello all performed a sweeping attack capable of defeating multiple enemies with a single blow, while Raphael was blessed with a unique roll-and-kick combo that was useful against some bosses.

Despite the Turtles being faster than their foes and boasting powerful specials, the game has earned a reputation as a contemptible coin-muncher. It's true that the later bosses can be a fairly cheap, but they're certainly not invincible. In our experience, at the height of the game's popularity, players were always eager to pump in extras credits and continue, or buy-in and help out their buddies – surely a clear indicator that Konami had produced a winning coin-op that delighted both players and operators.

Konami must have been pretty pleased with the game too. Having already experienced huge success with its first *TMNT* outing – a platform/adventure game developed initially for the NES – the company wasted no time in bringing the arcade game home. It developed a well-received NES conversion, which expanded on the coin-op by adding a couple of exclusive new levels. Home computer rights, meanwhile, went to Brit publisher Mirrorsoft, which commissioned Probe to convert the coin-op to the Spectrum, Amstrad CPC, Commodore 64, Amiga, Atari ST and PC in 1991. Like a lot of arcade conversions, these releases suffered from single-fire-button syndrome, where players had to clumsily push up and fire to jump.

In recent years, the arcade game has popped out of its shell on a couple of occasions. It was included as an unlockable extra in the 2004 game *TMNT 2: Battle Nexus*, and was probably the best thing about it. In 2007, Ubisoft put the coin-op out on Xbox Live Arcade complete with Achievements and a co-op mode. If you're an X360 owner looking for a nostalgia trip, 400 MS points is a small price to pay to party like it's 1990.

COIN-OP CAPERS
the expert



Until recently, Patrick Wheeler held the Twin Galaxies' TMNT high score with a haul of 1,085 points. We find out the story behind the score and why he has no plans to reclaim the record…

PROFILE
» **Name:** Patrick Wheeler
» **Age:** 30
» **Location:** Diboll, Texas
» **Key Twin Galaxies World Records:**
Metal Slug 3 [Arcade] 10,213,610 points
Sunset Riders [Arcade] 1,010,930 points
Jailbreak [Arcade] 9,999,900 points

■ **Retro Gamer: How long have you been gaming for?**
Patrick Wheeler: The past 22 years, starting with the NES at age seven. I credit games like *Battletoads*, *Contra*, *Life Force* and *Punch-Out!!* for giving me the skills necessary to compete at a higher level.

■ **RG: When and where did you first play *TMNT* and what were your initial impressions of the game?**
PW: I remember playing the game at a bowling alley when I was around ten years old. At the time I thought it was one of the most fun games I had ever played, because it was different from the typical platforming and shooting games that were common on game consoles during that time.



» [Arcade] Things can get pretty frantic when all four Turtles are in play.

■ **RG: Why did you decide to have a crack at taking the Twin Galaxies high score?**
PW: Another *TMNT* player offered a bounty on the Twin Galaxies forum in 2008 and, since I already knew the game inside and out, it was an easy cash-in.

■ **RG: Is your 1,085 score the one you claimed the bounty with, or did you do it with a lower score, and then build on it later?**
PW: There was a bit of drama. I made a recording to claim the bounty – I finished the game with a score of 555, with no leeching – and sent it to him. He accused me of cheating, so I then submitted the recording to Twin Galaxies for verification, and it was verified as legit. About three weeks after that, a higher score from a third player was verified and this one was full of boomerang leeching. So, the next day – 12 January, 2009 – I recorded a new score of 1,085, which was basically the same as my previous one, but with added boomerang leeching. I didn't submit it because I don't agree that boomerang leeching is a legitimate tactic that should be allowed. However, later that year the same person who offered the original bounty took first place, so I decided to submit my, at the time, seven-month-old score. I did this because none of the other players could finish the game, and I didn't feel that their recordings were actually worthy of first place.



» [Arcade] Hit fire hydrants to blast enemies with water.

■ **RG: Can you explain what you mean by 'leeching'?**
PW: It's possible to gain an infinite number of points by hitting the projectiles that enemies throw at you, as each one is worth one point. Doing this excessively would disqualify the recording. [The Twin Galaxies rules for the game state: "While some leeching is permitted in regards to opportunities against certain bosses (50 points maximum), too much will result in your score being disqualified."]

■ **RG: In April 2011, a new top score of 1,311 points by Saulo Bastos was verified by TG. Will you try and reclaim the record?**
PW: No, I won't. I've already finished the game many times, and seen everything there is to see. The only thing that could possibly be left to do is find an obscure point-pressing technique to exploit, but I have no interest in doing that.

■ **RG: Is it easier, or more difficult, to get a high score when playing with other players?**
PW: It's more difficult to score highly when playing with other players for two reasons: there are less enemies for each individual player to defeat, and it's harder to manipulate the movements and actions of each enemy because an enemy's focus tends to change from one player to another.

Perils and Pitfalls

You'll have to beat these bosses to total the Technodrome

Rockesteady
An early boss in many *TMNT* games. Move up and down to dodge his gunfire, and jump to avoid his running charge.





Bebop
Similar to Rocksteady, only slightly more powerful. Attack at close range, then quickly jump away before he retaliates.

General Traag
Having previously defeated Granitor, you must face his formidable boss. He's pretty slow so keep moving around the screen.





Krang
The toughest boss in the game. Use diving kicks where you can, or if you're playing as Raphael, spam his special move.

Shredder
The chief adversary tries to confuse you with clones. Just keep plugging away with your combos and specials until he falls.





» [Arcade] When Rocksteady and Bebop charge, jump out of the way and they'll smash skulls. The dolts.

■ **RG: Tell us briefly about your MAME setup.**
PW: I use my PC with a PlayStation 2 DualShock controller attached through a USB adapter.

■ **RG: How do you think the game holds up 20 years on?**
PW: I think it holds up well. The graphics are colourful and detailed, control is accurate, and it's the perfect length for this type of game. Most of the reviews say it's unfair and cheap, and that it's designed to suck quarters. Despite what these people say, it's possible to finish *TMNT* without taking any damage at all. I've never done it, but I've come close enough to know that it's possible.

■ **RG: Out of all of your records, which one are you most proud of?**
PW: My most impressive score is 10,213,610 in *Metal Slug 3*. This is a very complex game that requires nearly two hours to finish. The entire game must be memorised to point-press properly, because each segment of the game is unique and you never do the same thing twice. It took me 300 hours over a period of seven months to finally break the 10 million mark, and the feeling of satisfaction after doing that was incredible. *



» [Arcade] The skateboarding stage is not as tricky as it first appears, as it's more about dodging than attacking.

PATRICK'S SURVIVAL GUIDE

Useful tricks to help you freak the Foot Soldiers

1 ■ DO IT WITH DON
Use Donatello. It's much easier to finish the game in one credit with him, due to his long attack range. It's possible to finish with one of the other turtles, but it's considerably harder, especially against certain bosses.

2 ■ POINT TAKEN
Hit the rope that the robots fling toward you. Every hit is worth one point even though it doesn't actually damage the enemy. Also, hit the boomerangs that enemies throw at you. They're worth one point each too.

3 ■ KEY POSITION
Your character has more vertical range than the enemies, so use it to your advantage. The best way to handle an enemy is to move above or below them, then stop moving and time your attack to hit them as they move up/down to approach you.

4 ■ INCH FORWARD
To avoid being mobbed by enemies, advance through the levels gradually. By inching your way forward, you'll only spawn one or two enemies at a time, which makes the game a lot easier.



the sequels

Of the many Turtles games, these ones stay true to the original coin-op



TMNT III: The Manhattan Project

Released: 1991

The NES already had its own *Turtles* game, so the coin-op was released on the Nintendo console as *TMNT II: The Arcade Game*. This game then, from Konami, was a NES-exclusive sequel to the coin-op that was essentially an extra set of levels rather than a full-blown follow-up. The main difference was that each Turtle had their own special move. These were almost too powerful, particularly against the bosses, so to prevent the game from being a walkover you lost a little energy each time you used one. Overall, it was a fun yet derivative continuation of the coin-op. Note that there was a 1992 PC game called *TMNT: Manhattan Missions* but it has nothing to do with this game, being more of an adventure game with fighting elements.



TMNT: Turtles In Time

Released: 1991

This was the true sequel to the *TMNT* coin-op. The visuals were slicker (some lovely sprite-scaling effects were added), the action was faster and more frantic, the Turtles were blessed with new moves (included a run and shoulder barge), and everything was tuned to perfection, resulting in one of the best beat-'em-ups to grace the arcades. Home versions followed, with the SNES version renamed *TMNT IV* to remain consistent. The Mega Drive version was titled *TMNT: The Hyperstone Heist* and featured different stages. More recently, the game was given a graphical makeover and released for X360/PS3 as *Turtles In Time Re-Shelled*.



TMNT

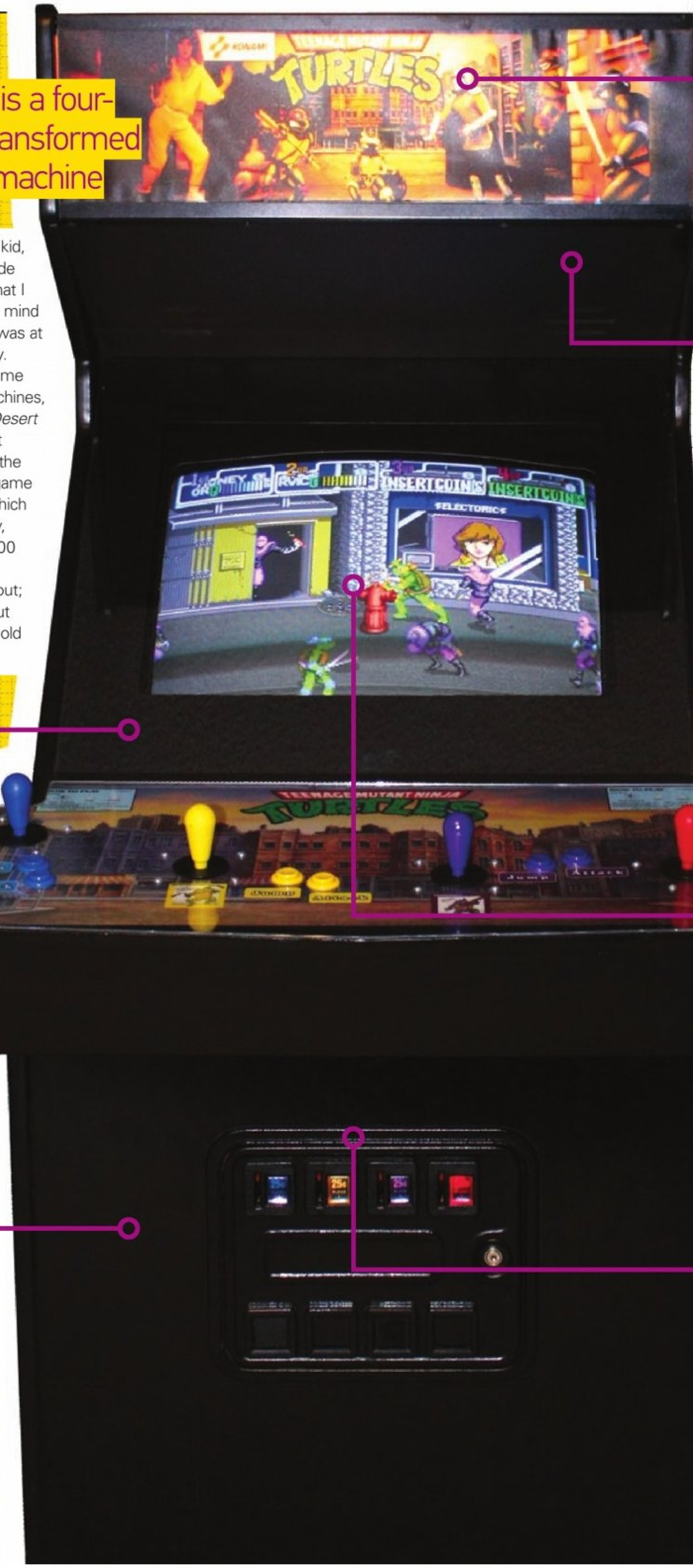
Released: 2007

The Turtles returned to cinemas in 2007 and Ubisoft was on hand to create games based on the CGI movie. Every platform received a generic tie-in except for the Game Boy Advance, which was treated to this delightful scrolling beat-'em-up. The game introduced a few RPG-lite elements, but thankfully they didn't detract from what was essentially a straight-up, old-school brawlathon. The graphics were great too, making this one title to track down and cherish. In 2009, Ubisoft released a game for the Nintendo DS called *TMNT: Arcade Attack*, which failed to recaptured the nostalgia of the Konami coin-ops anywhere near as well as this GBA offering.

COIN-OP CAPERS

the machine

Pride of place in James Dinndorf's games room is a four-player TMNT coin-op. Here, he reveals how he transformed an old Desert Assault cab into his most wanted machine





"I'm 27 and from St. Cloud, Minnesota. Since I was a kid, I always thought it would be really cool to own an arcade machine. Growing up in the Eighties, there are many that I have fond memories of but the first one that comes to mind is *TMNT*. This game was a revelation at the time, and was at the top of my want list even before I got into the hobby.

"In 2004, the owner of an old roller-skating rink told me he had a few games to sell. He showed me a few machines, but it didn't take me long to notice a large four-player *Desert Assault* game. The game itself didn't interest me, but it had my attention because the cabinet was identical to the four-player Konami cabinets that *TMNT* came in. The game worked fine and the cabinet was in excellent shape, which was crucial to me since it meant that the power supply, monitor, and wiring all worked. I handed the owner $400 and loaded the game into my friend's truck.

"I'm very pleased with how well my *TMNT* turned out; it's one of my favourites in my collection. I get a kick out of playing it with my friends and reminiscing about the old arcade days. It's like reliving a part of my childhood."

CONTROLS

The control panel was one of the more difficult tasks during this project. I began by removing the old joysticks and buttons, followed by the control panel overlay. I found a nice NOS *TMNT* overlay and discovered that the holes for the joysticks and buttons did not match the old holes. I drilled new holes, which was tricky since some of the new holes overlapped with the old ones. After some very tedious hours, it turned out very well. *TMNT* originally used leaf joysticks, but I decided to opt for microswitch joysticks. The leaf joysticks are difficult to find, and in my experience they're not as accurate as microswitch joysticks, particularly the diagonal directions.

ARTWORK

Having good side art was extremely important to me since it's one of the most iconic elements of the *TMNT* cabinet. I was able to find a company that produced nice quality reproduction side art. It came as two giant adhesive sheets that had to be cut to fit the cabinet's dimensions.



CABINET
The cabinet is in great shape. After the old artwork was removed, it was lightly sanded and repainted. I've since repainted the front of the cabinet and coin door as well. The wood is still in excellent shape, with no noticeable damage.

PCB
I found a working *TMNT* PCB on the internet. Since *TMNT* is a four-player game and of the JAMMA standard, it uses separate wiring harnesses for the third and fourth player controls. I ended up finding those harnesses through the KLOV forums and, after a little soldering, everything wired up nicely. I've recently acquired a *Turtles In Time* PCB and am in the process of constructing a JAMMA switcher that will allow me to run both *TMNT* games in the same cabinet.



MONITOR
The monitor was the only part in need of some serious work. The colours were washed out and the picture was warped a little and over-stretched. I opted to go for a new monitor. I bought a 25-inch monitor from a company that builds arcade monitors using a universal chassis and a good TV tube. It worked flawlessly and looked 100 times better than the original monitor.

COIN MECH
Original *TMNT* machines used a dual coin door layout. However, this cabinet used a single door with four slots, which I actually like more. I decided to customise the coin slots by adding colour-coated coin slot inserts that correlate to each player's colour. I think it adds a nice touch and it's one of my favourite components of the machine.

developer Q&A

We speak to Dave Semmens, the man behind the Spectrum and Amstrad CPC versions of Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles



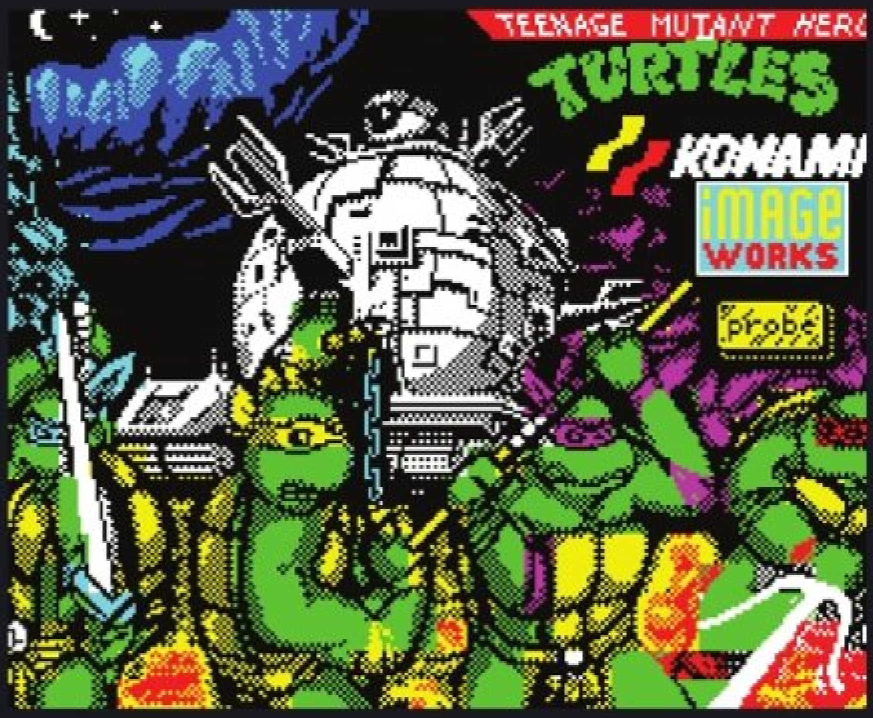
Retro Gamer: When were you bitten by the programming bug?
Dave Semmens: I had a ZX Spectrum and had a dabble at BASIC but thought that there must be a better way of coding for it. I bought a Z80 assembler and taught myself to code on evenings and weekends. I was a school kid at the time.

RG: How did you get the *TMNT* job?
DS: I was offered the contract as Probe could convert to most platforms but struggled to find someone to take on the Spectrum and Amstrad CPC versions.

RG: Did you have access to the coin-op machine during development?
DS: I travelled down to the south coast to play the coin-op. I took my artist with me and we had a day on the machine. We also had an end-to-end video of the game. It was not uncommon in the early days to do conversions after a quick play of the game and then only having photos of the screens.

RG: How long did the conversion take, and what do you remember as being the most challenging aspects of it?
DS: It normally took a couple of months to code a game. Programmers had their own libraries of sprite routines and scrolling routines so it was a straightforward job to get the bulk of the work done. The challenge on this game was the isometric view of the levels. I had only worked in 2D previously and this game needed X, Y and Z. The Turtles could move in and out of the screen and jump onto different height sections so it all took some working out. The other challenge was how to store all the graphics for each level. The answer was to split the sprites up into component parts so that the Turtles used the same body parts but I overlaid their individual weapons on top. The





baddies also reused body parts (legs, body and heads) and this saved enough memory to fit it all in.

RG: The first *Turtles* game was a full-colour affair, where as you opted for monochrome graphics on the Spectrum. What was the reason for this?
DS: The detail of the isometric levels and the way the sprites moved over them did not lend itself to the limited attribute colours of the Spectrum. It would have caused quite a bit of colour clash.

RG: The first game was a huge hit. There must have been a lot of pressure on you to come up with the goods.
DS: The games industry was always full of pressure to deliver the goods so it became the normal way of working. We always had tight deadlines and it was always hard to fit as much into the conversion as the publisher wanted, so I became used to it. I remember working 48 hours straight through on some games as deadline approached. Thank God I was young, as it would probably kill me now.

RG: Were you happy with the end result?
DS: I was very happy with the way the game played, and we fitted all the levels in and delivered on time. That's fine by me.

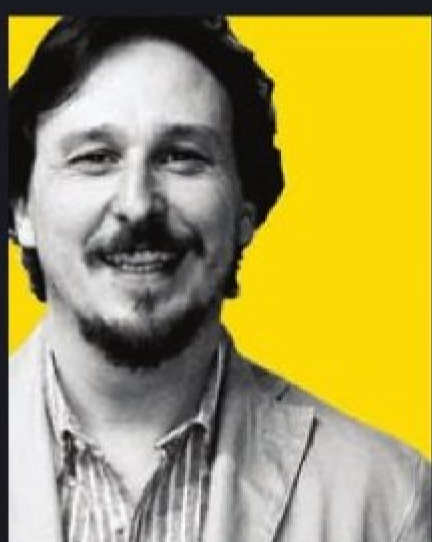
RG: Did you remain in the games industry, and what are you up to these days?
DS: I moved onto other games and other systems including ST, Amiga, PC, Game Gear, Master System, then onto the newer home systems. I left the industry around five years ago. I had moved from programmer to senior to lead and then into team management as a producer. Finally I became development director at Acclaim in Cheltenham. Unfortunately, a third redundancy opened my eyes to the fact that it was time to find something more stable.

I currently work as a project manager for a company in Sheffield. I still have some good friends that live the games development dream, but I'm happy with my life as it is now. ★

COIN-OP CAPERS

developer Q&A

Martin Bysh reveals why the 16-bit versions were sadly lacking



Retro Gamer: How did you end up with the job of converting *TMNT* to the Atari ST and Amiga?
Martin Bysh: After completing *Viz* for Probe Software they offered me *Turtles*. It looked like a straightforward conversion so I accepted.

RG: Did you work alongside Hugh Riley (graphics) and Jeroen Tel (music), or was everything done remotely?
MB: I never met or even spoke to Hugh or Jeroen. Everything was supplied by Probe. This was typical of the Probe method.

RG: Were the ST and Amiga versions developed simultaneously, or one after the other?
MB: One after the other. I can't remember which I did first, but my preference would have been for the ST as that would have presented the most problems. Porting a game from ST to Amiga could take as little as a couple of weeks, whereas porting from superior hardware down would always present problems. I had specialised in such ports prior to *Viz* and *TMNT*, converting games from one to the other, often in as little as a week.

RG: How long did it take to complete the job?
MB: I can't remember exactly how long the development took, but it overran considerably. We ran into problems on certain Amiga 1000s with the unusual Amiga compressed disk format we were using.

RG: Did Probe monitor your progress and give you feedback as the development progressed?
MB: Probe monitored progress, but not at strict intervals. The industry was beginning to mature at that point, but it was still pretty informal. The job of producer eventually emerged to bring order, but it was quite a recent addition to the games industry then. And the average producer's lack of technical knowledge and experience, combined with the independent character of the invariably self-taught programmers, artists and musicians, left them as little more than glorified messengers, passing notes between us.

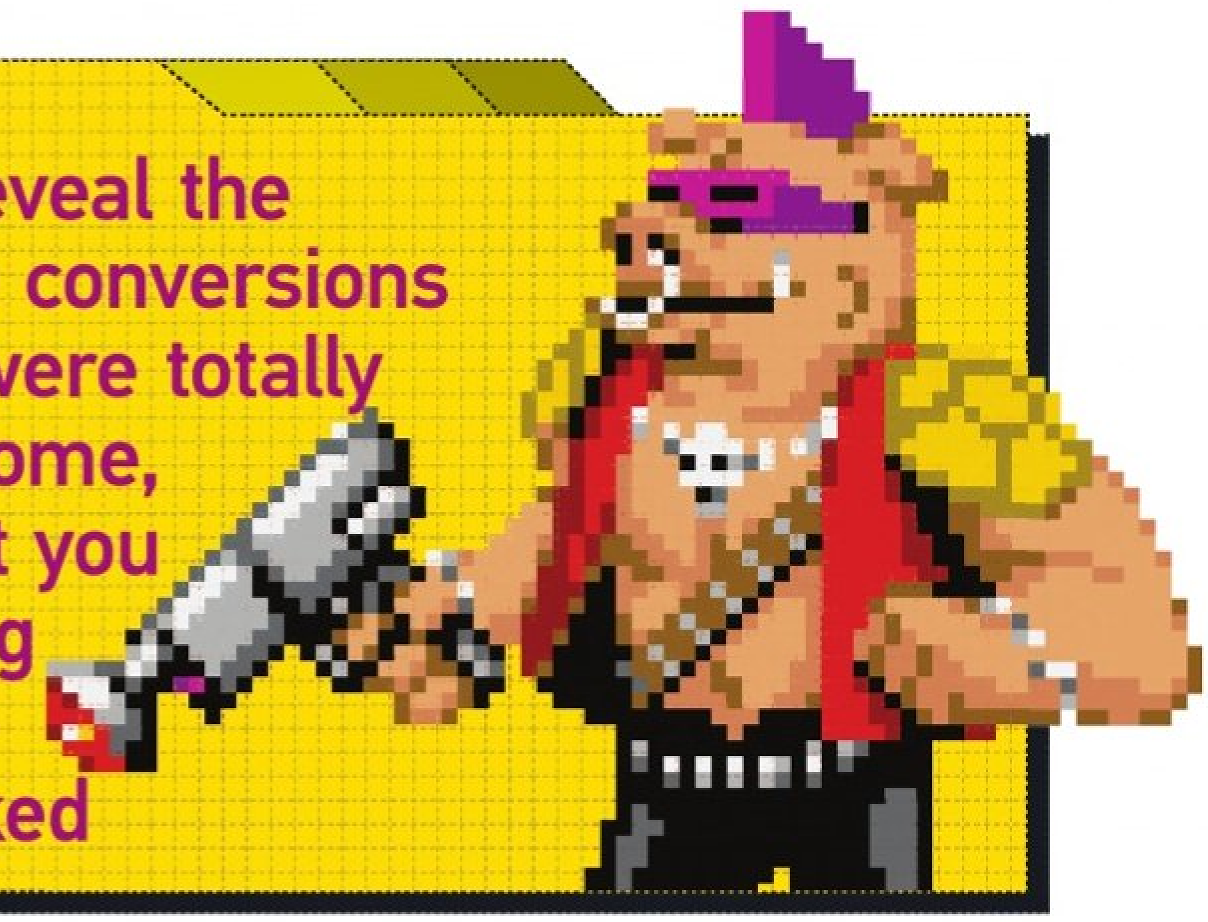
RG: How pleased were you with the finished product?
MB: Not very. This was the 13th game I'd published without rest, and I'd begun to tire of the process, which was reflected in the final product. The Probe system, while very lucrative for them, was not enjoyable for a developer. Previously I'd had much more control over products, managing the graphics and sound, or even taking a product to beta before selling it. Creating Probe games felt as dull and uncreative as the quick Amiga-ST ports I'd been doing, but whereas the ports took a couple of very well-paid weeks, *Turtles* took many months. I'd say that *Turtles* was one of the main drivers for me leaving the industry and going to university. I returned to it after uni, but by then it had become big business and after managing a large team of developers for a film tie-in, I left it about 12 years ago. With the exception of *TMNT*, it was fun while it lasted.





the conversions

We reveal the home conversions that were totally awesome, or left you feeling shell-shocked



01. NES (Best Version)

Bar the arcade-perfect Xbox Live Arcade version, we think the NES offering is the best port of Konami's arcade game. It looks the part with bright colourful visuals and well animated sprites, and also plays the part with solid collision detection and authentic representations of the original levels. Like the other home versions, it loses out due to the lack of four-player support, but it does make up for this oversight with the inclusion of two additional exclusive levels and greatly extended levels from the arcade original. A few changes are made to the boss roster (the end battle against Bebop and Rocksteady now has you fighting Baxter Stockman), but this is an otherwise excellent port.

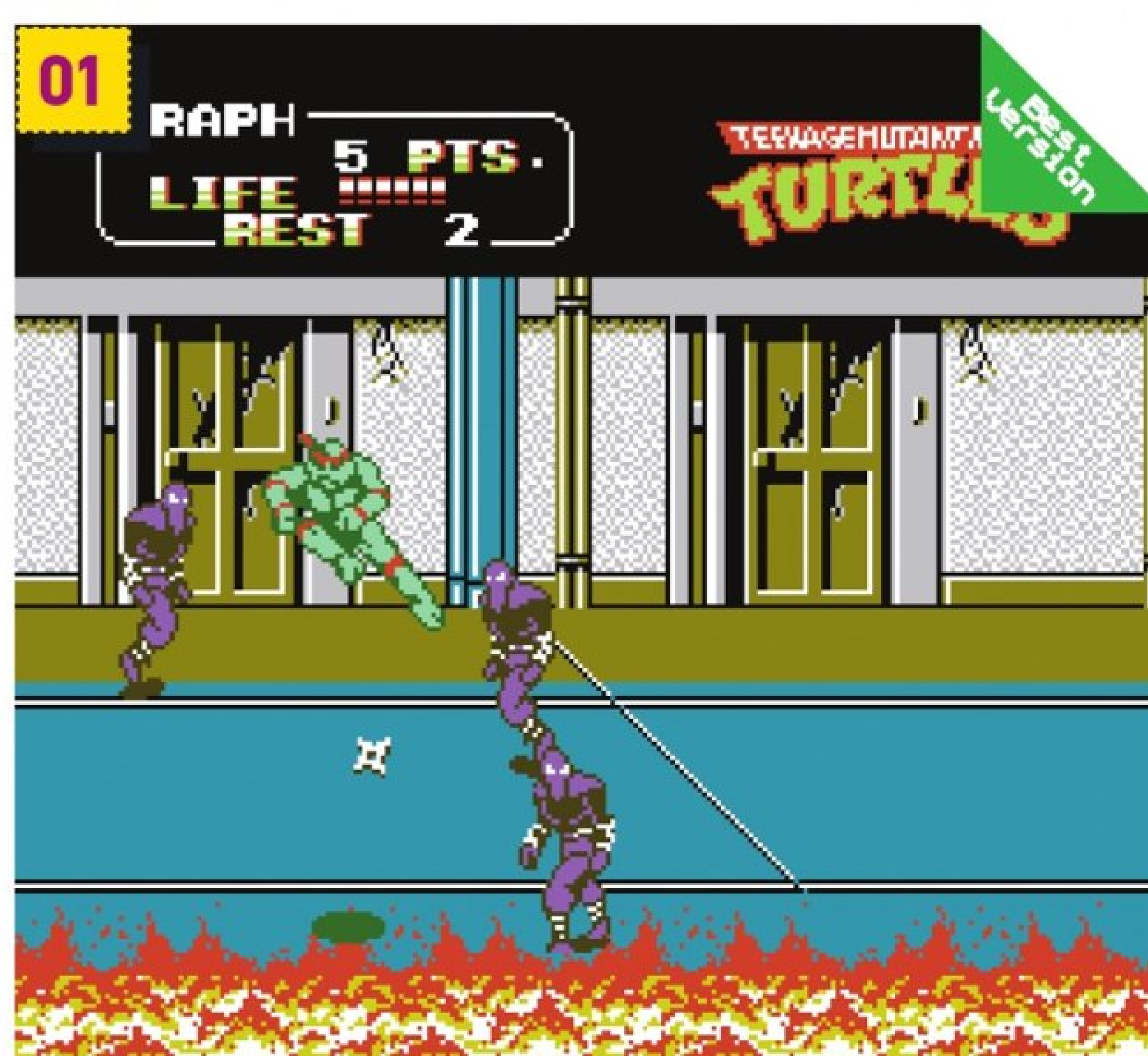
02. Amstrad CPC

All the 8-bit computer ports are of a very high standard, but our favourite is easily the CPC offering. For starters it looks glorious, with bright, cartoony visuals, excellent animation and – shock horror – genuinely decent scrolling. Probe were masters at getting the best out of Lord Sugar's machine, and *Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles: The Coin-Op* was no exception. Like the other 8-bit ports, it lacks the killer pace and constant assault of enemies that the original coin-op offered, but this is still an excellent port that even non-CPC owners will appreciate.

03. Commodore 64

The C64 version isn't quite as good as the Amstrad offering, but

01



Best Version

















we still had a lot of fun with it. The colour scheme may not be as nifty as the CPC game, and the sprites are a lot smaller, but they remain perfectly formed and well animated. The backgrounds are of a very high standard, while the collision detection is very similar to the Amstrad offering, and a darn sight better than the ropey 16-bit offerings. It again suffers from a lack of pace and urgency, but this is mainly down to the fact that so few enemies (typically three) are ever on-screen, meaning it never feels as exciting to play as Konami's coin-op. Despite these issues, the Commodore 64 version is another worthy conversion that fans of the arcade original will still enjoy.

04. Atari ST

In some ways the Atari ST port is extremely similar to Probe's woeful Amiga offering. It's redeemed by a number of important differences though. The scrolling, while far from perfect, isn't as juddery as the Amiga offering, and there is a decent representation of the original theme tune playing along in the background. Collision detection is also slightly better that its Amiga counterpart, although it still doesn't feel as tight as the 8-bit games. It's far from perfect, and falls short of the superior 8-bit offerings, but it's a rare triumph for the Atari ST, which typically flailed behind Commodore's Amiga when it came to conversions.

05. ZX Spectrum

The Spectrum conversion of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* is another slick port, and further testament to Probe's coding skills. Unlike its peers, the Spectrum offering is in monochrome, lacking the colourful visuals that work so well on the Amstrad and C64 versions. Luckily, the Speccy offering has some great detail in its large sprites, meaning it still manages to capture the humour and larger-than-life appeal of Konami's original coin-op. Collision detection is very good, while Probe has done a good job of trying to capture all the elements of the arcade game. There are often more enemies on-screen than the other 8-bit versions, meaning that it's a little more frenetic than the Amstrad and C64 offerings.

06. PC

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles on the PC suffers from all the same problems that were an issue on the other 16-bit computers. It's better than the Amiga version, but on a par with the Atari ST offering. Like the other home versions it lacks the four-player support found in the original arcade game, but the two-player action is fast-paced and helped along by the sheer number of enemies that constantly attack you. It's probably our favourite version out of all the 16-bit offerings, but it's still a disappointment – more so when you put it up against the superior 8-bit versions and the fun NES game.

07. Xbox Live Arcade

Unsurprisingly, the Xbox Live Arcade version of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* was an exact port of the arcade original. Ported by conversion kings Digital Eclipse, it featured all the levels from the original arcade game, and also boasted online play, enabling you to play with up to three other people online. Released to tie in with the 2007 movie, the character screen tied in with the style of the characters in the film, but it was an otherwise perfect port and a steal at just 800 points. Sadly, the game is no longer on sale, so if you missed it on its original release, you're now out of luck.

08. GameCube/Xbox/PS2

The worst thing about this port of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* was that you had to endure playing the decidedly average *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2: Battle Nexus* in order to unlock it. Once unlocked, it revealed itself to be an extremely authentic port of the arcade original. The only differences were some alterations to the music and the loss of many of the voice clips, presumably because Ubisoft didn't have the rights to use them.

09. Commodore Amiga (Worst Version)

Amazingly, the Amiga version of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* is extremely poor when compared to its 8-bit peers. The scrolling throughout is very jerky and off-putting, while the animation is also stiff and stilting, lacking the smooth-flowing visuals of the arcade game. It earns additional points for having far more on-screen enemies than the 8-bit games, but this simply highlights the poor collision that the Amiga port suffers from. It also lacks the extended and additional levels that were found in the NES game, making the whole thing a massive disappointment for fans of the arcade game. The final nail in the coffin was a complete lack of music in the game and extremely weedy sound effects. A disappointingly bland port that could have been a lot better.

THE UNCONVERTED

Arcade games that never made it home





IN DEPTH

» During the pursuit, these blue orbs inscribed with the letter J will appear on the road – pick them up to top up your jump reserve.

» This is your avatar, and you have two powers at your disposal: a turbo boost to rear-end and shunt enemy drivers off the road, and a limited jumping ability.

» The gameplay is basically split into two parts: take out the gang members and then bash the stuffing out of their leader. Both must be done in a strict time limit.

A.B. COP

■ **Developer:** Sega ■ **Year:** 1990 ■ **Genre:** Racing

■ **Fans of *Chase H.Q.* should most certainly set time aside this month to investigate Sega's *A.B. Cop*: an unconverted action racer that plays like a blend of *Hang-On* and Taito's cop-chaser classic.**

Set in the future, you assume the role of a mysterious traffic-cop-with-no-name who rides an air bike and is tasked the thrilling job of hurtling down sprite-scaling roads at breakneck speeds to hunt down a band of intergalactic criminals and their biker gang pals. Before the start of each mission, a cinematic flashes up to show you who it is you're chasing and why, the list of criminals including an escaped biomechanical monster that breaks free from its lab, a drug dealing samurai, and a kinky kidnapper who likes to imprison underwear models and dress up like a clown.

In what can only be described as a pretty lazy and unsatisfying finale, the last mission sees all the criminals that you've just invested your hard-earned cash imprisoning escape from the clink and you having to recapture them all over again. This bizarrely leads to a final fight against a goofy alien who attacks by throwing sprites of himself at you.

As well being able to bank left or right, the cop has two tricks up his sleeves: an unlimited speed boost, which doesn't last long before it needs to replenish, and a limited jump ability, while using them together (turbo-ing towards an enemy and then pressing jump to smash into its chest) proves a good technique to drain energy from the bosses.

There really isn't a hell of a lot to *A.B. Cop*, but you'd struggle to find a more satisfyingly shallow arcade experience. The levels are fairly easy to complete; the bosses and enemies are essentially palette swaps; the roads are dressed with hardly any detail… or even traffic until you reach the last few missions. And the gameplay is as simple as it comes – smash into a requisite number of bikers before the timer reaches zero, and then repeatedly smash into the stage boss until it explodes – but that's part of its charm.

Displaying all the pleasant and comfortable trappings of a Nineties action arcade racer, *A.B. Cop* is perfect for an amusement arcade setting, but had it received a home console conversion we'd imagine you'd be feeling quite short-changed.



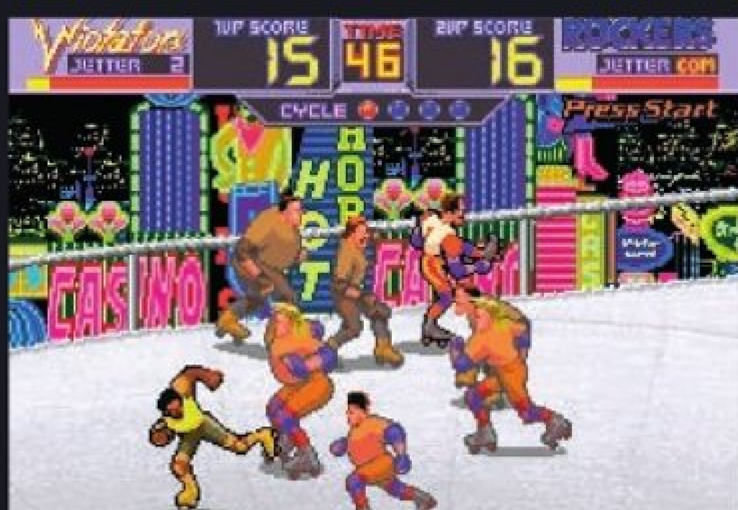
CONVERTED ALTERNATIVE

CHASE H.Q. 1988

A.B. Cop is clearly Sega's stab at replicating the success of *Chase H.Q.*, but with the action dropped into a future setting with motorbikes. It doesn't quite match *Chase*'s character, visuals or overall quality, but it's still ruddy good fun nevertheless.

ROLLERGAMES

■ **Developer:** Konami ■ **Year:** 1991 ■ **Genre:** Beat-'em-up



» [Arcade] Visually, Konami was clearly trying for something along the lines of *Guardian Heroes* meets Scissor Sisters.

■ **Konami produced a** load of licensed coin-ops in the Nineties, and a number were unconverted titles that have featured on these pages in the past. *Rollergames* is one of its most obscure, and that's because it was based on a short-lived US TV show of the same name that ambitiously tried to do for the sport of Roller Derby what the WWF did for grown-up play-fighting. Anyway, the show never took off, only lasting a single season, but enough potential was seen in it to put an arcade game into production, and this was the result. *Rollergames* can best be described as an on-rails side-scrolling beat-'em-up. It sees you select your team from the six on offer and compete in four rounds, two with the men and two with the women, to complete a cycle of the track and basically rack up as many knock-downs as you can in four rounds. When the race is over, an unnecessary and embarrassing-looking one-on-one fight breaks out with two moves: punch and kick. With no difference in the tracks you race other than the background graphics, the game a clear button-basher, and with all the teams sharing the same move repertoire, *Rollergames* is fun in short bursts but gets repetitive quite quickly. While *Rollergames was released for the* NES a year before the coin-op, it's dramatically different.

CONVERTED ALTERNATIVE

DJ BOY 1989

Featuring forced scrolling stages and roller skates, Kaneko's *DJ Boy* sees a cartoonish roller derby fighter taking the sport of skate combat onto the streets. Clearly designed to tap into the hip hop culture of America, the game was exclusively converted to the Genesis.



CONVERTED ALTERNATIVE

GUNBIRD 1994

We opted for this fun and entertaining shooter by Psikyo, which was released the same year as *Eight Forces*, features a large roster of quirky characters, and also starts the player off on a random stage too. It was ported to the Saturn and PlayStation.



EIGHT FORCES

■ **Developer:** Tecmo ■ **Year:** 1994 ■ **Genre:** Shoot-'em-up



» [Arcade] A tough one to recommend, *Eight Forces* is a decent shooter, but by heck is it bloody hard going.

■ **This unconverted shooter** is guaranteed to provide a workout for more dextrous shoot-'em-up players out there. Tecmo's *Eight Forces* is a gruelling vertical shooter that boasts a couple of rather nice twists – the first of which sees player one and player two given their own unique selection of four ships to choose from at the start of the game. Player one is given the choice of a quartet made up of craft piloted by biomechanical characters that look like they were lifted from moody looking anime shows (plus an odd wine-swilling chap with a horse's head), while the second player's fleet comprises four colourful and slightly less menacing-looking quirky cutesy ships. With a simple weapon levelling up system, and each ship having their own unique spread bomb secondary attack, the other notable aspect of *Eight Forces* is that the game seems to start you off on a random level with each load-up – we started and restarted the game several times to check this theory. It's a good idea though, as the game is so bloody nails that it's the probably the only way you'd ever get to see more than one stage.

BEST LEFT IN THE ARCADE

NINJA CLOWNS

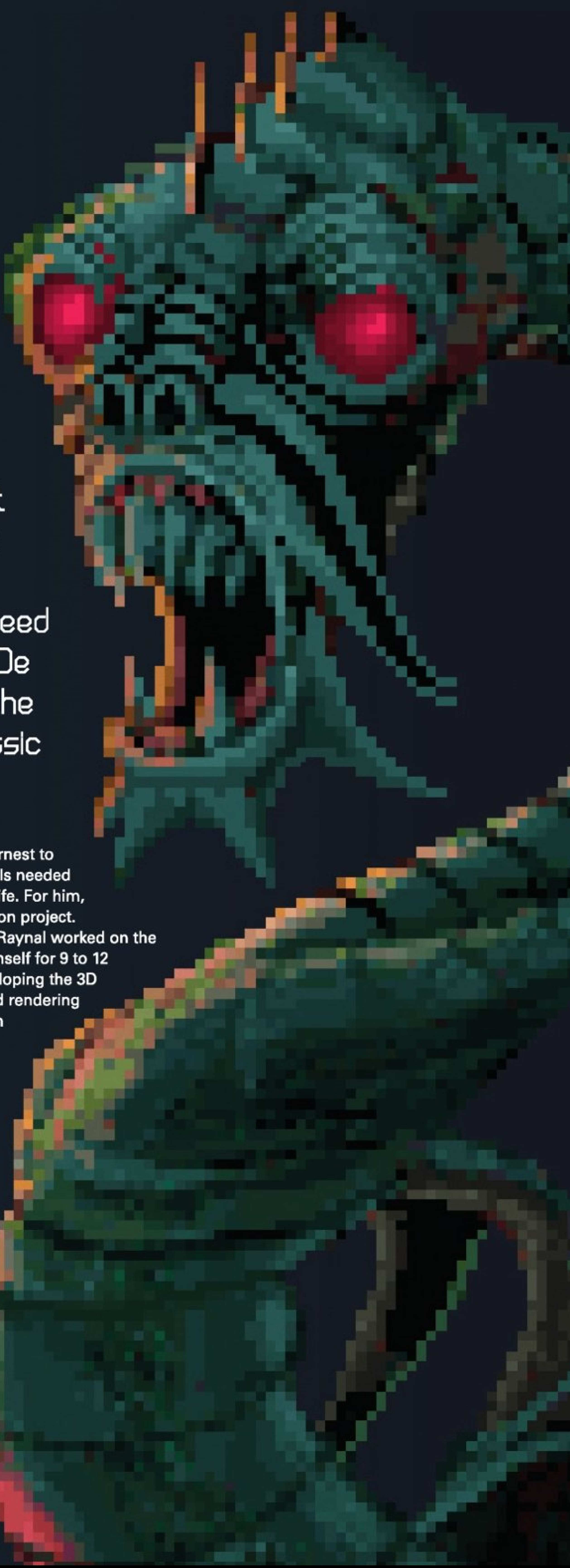
■ **Developer:** Strata ■ **Year:** 1991 ■ **Genre:** Beat-'em-up

■ **Developed by the** people that brought us the *Golden Tee Golf* series (those trackball golf games you only ever seem to see in pubs), *Ninja Clowns* is one the developer's more forgettable titles. Though we will admit it does have a certain offbeat charm, there is little doubt we should all be thankful for the fact we were mercifully spared a home conversion. We couldn't determine any real plot propping up its gameplay; it simply appears to be about two aggressive clowns who take to the streets to indiscriminately beat up – using a mixture of ninja moves and clown equipment – whatever and whoever they come across, be they league bowlers, businessmen, vomiting bearded ladies, Elvis impersonators, or a freakish leggy buxom chicken/lady that bends over and launches eggs from her pert arse. As we said, it has moments of offbeat charm. Not terrible, but certainly not great either.

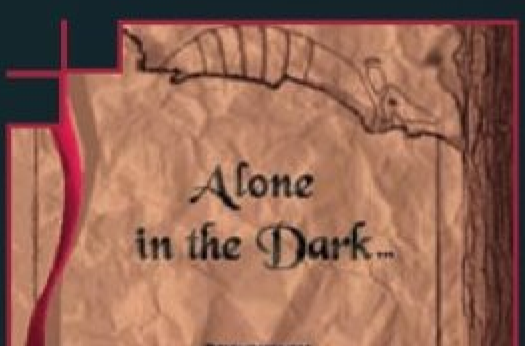


THE MAKING OF





Alone in the Dark 1 & 2



IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** INFOGRAMES
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **RELEASED:** 1992/1993
- » **PLATFORM:** AITD: PC, MAC, 3DO; AITD2: PC, MAC, 3DO, SATURN, PLAYSTATION
- » **GENRE:** SURVIVAL HORROR

Through clever scare tactics and use of 3D characters against 2D backdrops, Alone In The Dark immersed gamers and opened a portal from which a whole new breed of horror would escape. Franck De Girolami reveals to Stuart Hunt the role he played in bringing this classic French monster to life

It's a piano that brings private investigator Edward Carnby to the spooky Louisiana mansion, Derceto. He's been hired by an antique dealer to find the instrument that once belonged to the late artist Jeremy Hartwood. It's believed to be located in the mansion's attic, the same attic where Hartwood took his life. Down on his luck and seeing it as a straightforward assignment, Carnby accepts the work and enters the large, empty house under the cover of night.

Jeremy Hartwood's suicide note is what brings Emily Hartwood to her late uncle's home. The unusual circumstances surrounding Jeremy Hartwood's death seem to have been brushed under the carpet by police and locals. The feeling around town is that the Derceto house is odious, and its people and authorities are happy to keep their distance from the building and anybody associated with it. But their indifference to her uncle's suicide simply makes Emily even more compelled to find this note, for she feels it could hold the only key to explain why her uncle killed himself. Arriving outside the doors, she steps across its threshold to hopefully find her answers.

The first seeds of what would become *Alone In The Dark* were planted in the offices of Infogrames by its CEO, Bruno Bonnell. He had fed down to his staff an idea for a game that would see players relying on sounds and lit matches to illuminate their otherwise dark environment. The concept is uncannily similar to ideas later seen in *Silent Hill*, which used radio static and a flashlight to navigate its caustic, ashen streets.

Dubbed *In The Dark*, Bonnell's idea instantly gained the interest of Frédérick Raynal, a talented programmer and horror film fan who had long harboured a strong desire to create a horror-based game. As *Alone In The Dark*'s first assistant, Franck De Girolami, recalls events, when Bonnell announced his idea to the room, Raynal saw and seized his opportunity and quickly set about working in earnest to create the tools needed to bring it to life. For him, it was a passion project.

"Frédérick Raynal worked on the project by himself for 9 to 12 months, developing the 3D animation and rendering technology on his own," remembers Franck. "I joined at that point

THE MAKING OF



» [PC] Later areas of the house require a bit of athletics from the player.



» [PC] On why *AITD* featured two playable characters, Franck seems to remember Frédérick Raynal wanting to offer an alternative for female players.

to help with finalising the toolset. Once the tools were ready, we progressively brought in four graphic artists and a sound artist. Another programmer joined us near the end to help us complete the game on time. During that time, there was also a writer working with us that was later replaced by Hubert Chardot, who worked on the sequels as well. So the team was about ten people in total."

Since as far back as Franck can remember, he knew he wanted to work in videogames. While studying at college, he achieved his dream after he applied for an internship at Infogrames, which was based in his home town of Lyon.

Alone In The Dark was Franck's first job in the industry. He joined the project as a programmer, developing the environment tool and anything associated with the game's environment, including the collision system and object management. He was responsible for creating the camera tool that framed Derceto's many rooms and also helped to give *Alone In The Dark* its arresting, cinematic look.

"Basically the artists would create rooms out of blocks, place cameras and generate a wireframe rendering of the view," he explains. "Then they would import that wireframe into Deluxe Paint and paint it. After that, the picture would be re-imported into the tool and we would create the effect of a z-buffer [image depth] by basically selecting 3D areas on the ground and associating them with parts of the picture. For example, if there was a table in the picture, we would create a 3D area on the ground behind the table opposite the camera and select pixels of the picture that would be displayed over characters that were in that 3D area."

As *Alone In The Dark*'s development progressed so design aspects would alter as the team discovered the limitations of the tech they were using and new ideas were broached, discussed and applied. Things gradually began moving away from Bonnell's light and dark concept, and more towards a design that would see players relying on wits and exploration to escape a dimly lit Twenties house of horrors. In hindsight, this fundamental change made sense, as *AITD*'s clever graphics tech, which placed 3D character models against stunning rendered backdrops, would have undoubtedly been for nothing in a game cast mostly in darkness.

> The new tenants of Derceto included recognisable creatures from the Cthulhu mythos

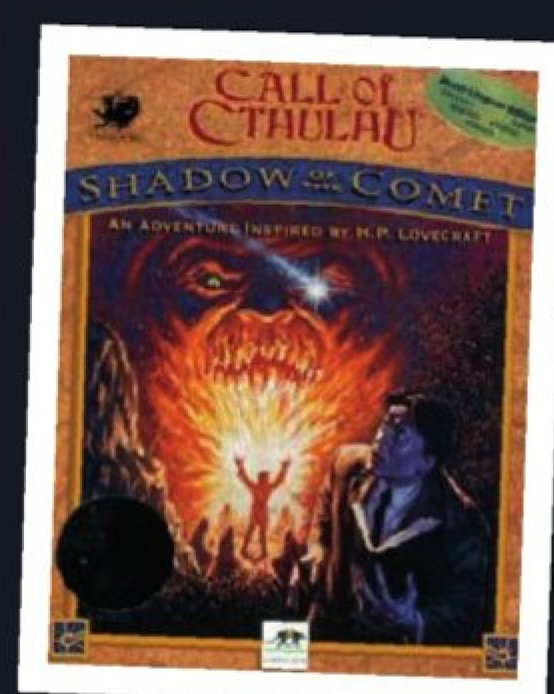
As far as the technical side of things was concerned, though, few changes were made to Raynal's thorough plans. The 12 months of meticulous groundwork he had spent preparing the tools for the job had ensured that the manner in which the team was constructing *AITD* was solid, and everyone was clear on their roles. Franck does recall, however, one aspect of the game's assembly that required a rethink by the team; one that, interestingly, led to the game's painterly look.

"It had to do with how we create environments," he recalls. "The original concept was to go to a location – a castle or a mansion – take measurements and take pictures with several 'markers'. We would then use a tool to re-create that environment's collisions and position cameras so that the markers in the tool would match the ones in the picture. Basically, the idea was to use real pictures as backgrounds and to have the artist effectively try to 'guess' where the camera originally was and what the lens parameters were. This proved impossible, so we had to change everything around and generate wireframes that were painted by the artists instead. I think this turned out to be for the best, as I don't think our 3D characters would have looked very good on real photographs."

Not long into *Alone In The Dark*'s development, Bonnell struck a deal with tabletop game publisher Chaosium that saw Infogrames acquire the *Call Of Cthulhu* game licence. It was then that the order came from above to fill Derceto's rooms with creatures and monsters from the works of HP Lovecraft, and the team set about evicting most, but not all, of the shambling zombies that were originally living there. The new tenants included Nightgaunts, Deep Ones and a Chthonian – all recognisable creatures from the *Cthulhu* mythos.

As we know, *AITD* was released without the *Cthulhu* name, its box instead simply mentioning that it is an adventure game inspired by the work of Lovecraft. The reason for the restrained connection is said to be that Chaosium felt that

SHADOW OF THE COMET



THOUGH *ALONE IN THE DARK* didn't tie itself explicitly to the *Call Of Cthulhu* pen-and-paper game, Infogrames released an adventure game that did display the *Cthulhu* name. *Call Of Cthulhu: Shadow Of The Comet* (1993) was a point-and-click adventure that took inspiration and concept from various Lovecraft sources. Its story followed a photographer who arrives at a sleepy town to get a good snap of Halley's Comet. Of course, this being a Lovecraft-inspired tale, it isn't long before a deep conspiracy is uncovered in the town and the assignment starts to take a more sinister path. Considered to be one of the best Lovecraft-based videogames by fans, it was followed up with an indirect sequel, *Prisoner Of Ice*, two years later.



Alone In The Dark lacked the complexity of its award-winning pen-and-paper game. While this is fair to a point, scratch beneath *AITD*'s surface and you soon discover that the two games are much closer in their design than they first appear.

Call Of Cthulhu was an uncharacteristic role-playing game. It dropped the more traditional levelling and dragon-slaying elements in favour of underpowered characters gradually unravelling a terrifying global conspiracy that begins fairly innocuously. This shares a parallel with the way in which *Alone In The Dark*'s story unfurls, starting with the search for a piano and a note before quickly taking the player down a far more sinister and terrifying path.

Call Of Cthulhu saw players relying on their wits to battle creatures and survive dangers, and in certain instances even running away to stay alive. These practices are also essential to surviving your quest in *AITD*. There are enemies in Derceto that cannot be defeated, while puzzle-solving plays a much bigger role in its gameplay than combat.

AITD's story is also influenced by the work of Lovecraft. During the adventure, Carnby and Emily uncover the reason behind Hartwood's suicide through notes and books around the house, the tomes including Robert Bloch's *Mysteries Of The Worm* and Lovecraft's fictional spell book Necronomicon, both of which feature in the author's *Cthulhu* mythos.

Of course, with this new Lovecraft association, further pressure was on to make *AITD* frightening for the player. Franck explains the ways in which the team achieved this, and how they came up with some of the cunning scare tactics in the game: "We just played and played and improved. I think we realised early on that sound had a big impact. We added random creaky sounds just to create the atmosphere. Also we realised that the camera angles in which the player was the most helpless were the best to bring in a monster. Players would instantly run for a view in which they felt comfortable. Also, we tried to do something different in every room so that the player would never know what to expect. But overall it was really hard to know what would be scary or not because there was just no element of surprise for us."

In the closing stages of *AITD*'s development, Raynal and his team worked assiduously to iron out bugs in the game before it shipped, and Franck admits that not all of them were fixed before its release. It was an ongoing fight for the series, in fact. He remembers fixing bugs all the way to the end of *AITD2*, and even heard that more had to be fixed in *AITD3*.

Given how visually impressive *AITD* was for its day, it comes as little surprise to discover that one of the biggest problems was getting the game to perform well on modest PC hardware. The team was ardent in ensuring that it could be experienced by as many people as possible, but this caused a few headaches.

"The main issues we had were performance and memory," remembers Franck. "Our target machine was an 8086, which was not a powerhouse. Also, some video cards back then could not render faster than six frames per second, even with nothing on the screen! Finally, we had to support the IBM PS/1, which only had 512KB of memory, and that was a challenge. One thing that we found out later

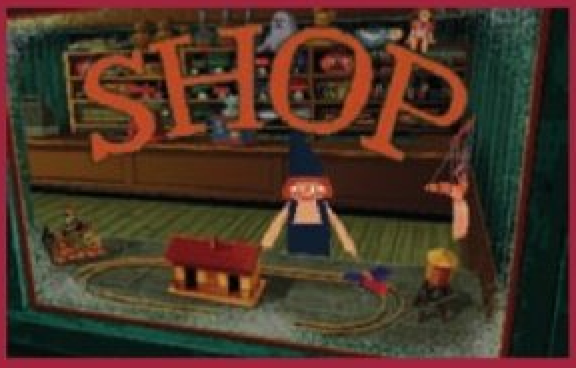
Jack In The Dark

AS IF TIME wasn't stretched enough for Franck and his team, they were given the added job of creating a promotional game simultaneously with *AITD2*. The game in question was *Jack In The Dark*, a mini-adventure that served as a teaser for *AITD2* and saw players assume the role of little Grace Saunders, the kidnapped girl from *AITD2*.

The story saw Grace getting locked inside a vintage toy store on Halloween night. Inside, the malevolent toys become animated, and when Grace learns that *the* Santa Claus is being tormented by an evil jack-in-the-box, she soon realises that her job isn't as straightforward as escaping. Relying on wits alone, Grace must outfox the toys to save Christmas.

Though short, *JITD* is an entertaining curio that fans should seek out. Franck explains why the game came about: "Boosted by the sales of *Alone In The Dark* in the US, Infogrames was planning to start a full-time presence in the US through I-Motion, their US publishing branch. They wanted a small game for Halloween that would prepare the field for *AITD2*. We developed *Jack In The Dark* concurrently."



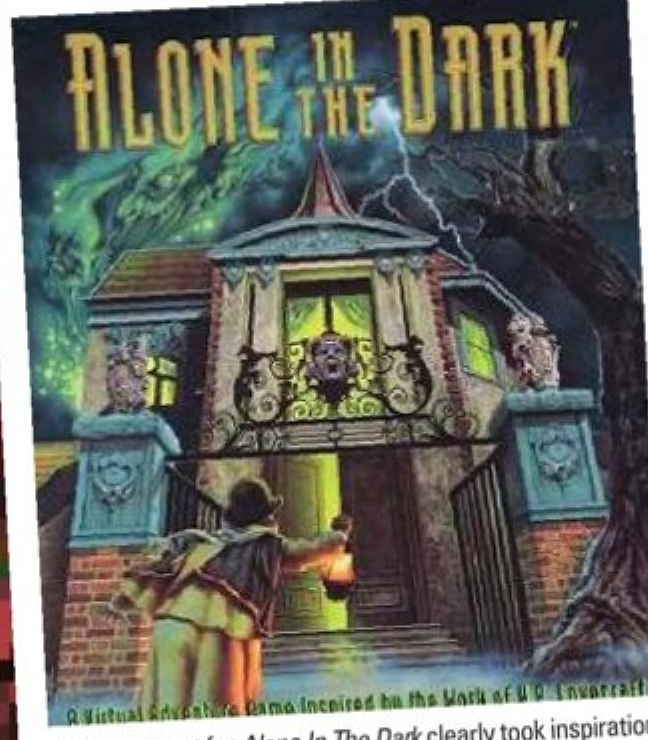


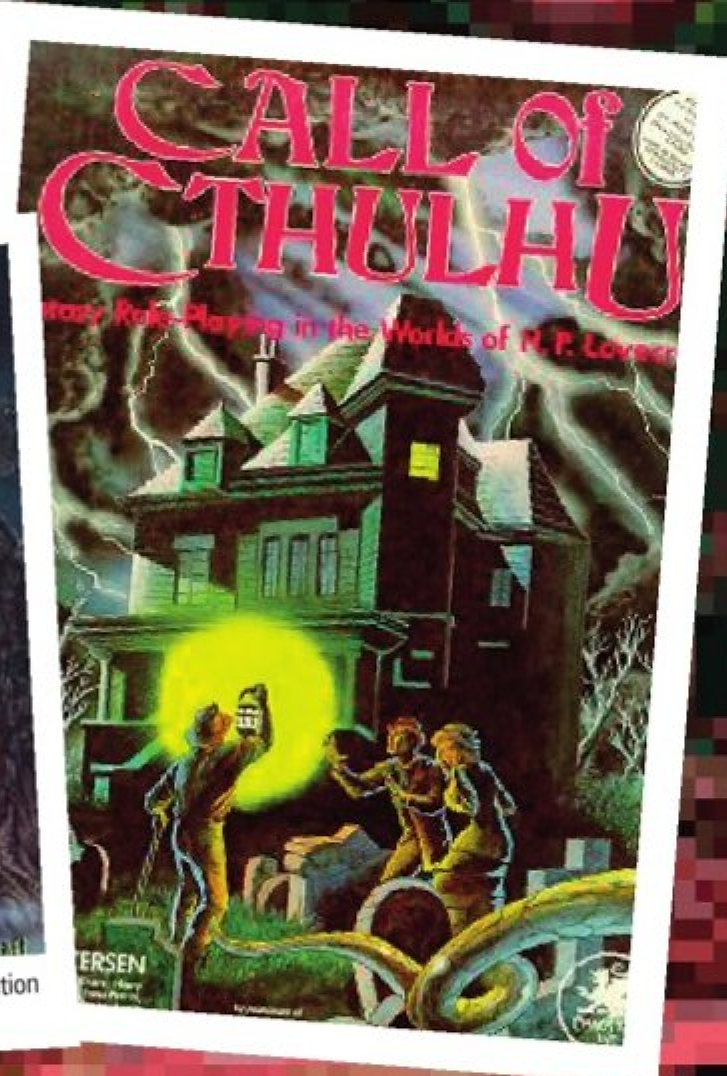


» After finishing *Alone In The Dark 2*, Franck moved to the US and co-founded the studio Code Particle.



» [PC] Just three members of the original *AITD* team worked on the sequel: first assistant Franck De Girolami, art director Patrick Charpenet and writer Hubert Chardot.





» The cover art for *Alone In The Dark* clearly took inspiration from the box of the *Call Of Cthulhu* role-playing game.

ALONE IN THE CINEMA

PERHAPS AS A result of the box-office success of the *Resident Evil* movies, *Alone In The Dark* also received a movie adaptation. Released in 2005, it was originally meant to tie in with the release of the *Alone In The Dark* reboot from Eden Games – hence the game and movie starring a younger-looking Edward Carnby and events taking place in the modern day. However, the game's release was delayed and this, of course, made the modernised look of the movie stick out like a sore thumb for fans of the original PC trilogy.

Directed by Uwe Boll and starring Christian Slater as Edward Carnby, alongside Tara Reid and Stephen Dorff, its story seems to take most of its inspiration from the 2001 game *Alone In The Dark: The New Nightmare*, as it explains that Carnby is a member of a paranormal investigations agency dubbed Bureau 713.

The film sees him investigating the disappearance of orphans and having to dig into his past. You learn that Carnby, an orphan himself, underwent numerous experiments as a child, giving him paranormal and *Matrix*-style powers. The story's poor, and it won an impressive number of turkey awards, but it still received a sequel in 2008.



on is that in the process of optimising the transformation routines, Frederick actually went too far and made a simplification that was not correct but really helped with speed. Since the entire toolset worked with that same simplification, there was no bug! The animations were created with that same error and played back just the same way!"

Released at a time when 3D gaming was still in its infancy, *AITD*'s visuals were both unusual and a breath of fresh air. Seamlessly mixing 3D character models with highly detailed rendered 2D backdrops, it gave the illusion of playing a highly detailed three-dimensional game. The technique proved a popular design model for the 3D 'survival horror' genre, with Capcom's *Resident Evil* series later adopting the exact same approach, leaving Konami and its *Silent Hill* series to move things forward with true 3D environments.

When *AITD* was released in 1992, it was met with both success and acclaim. The team knew it had created something unique and special, but had no idea that it would become as successful as it did. Infogrames was understandably keen to capitalise on the attention the game was receiving and so quickly greenlit a sequel.

But the last few months of the project had taken their toll on Raynal and his team. Following an internal disagreement with Bonnell about the direction the sequel would take, nearly all the original *AITD* team left Infogrames, including Raynal. Many of the team would stay together, later forming Adeline Software International and producing the excellent *Little Big Adventure* series. The mass departure left just Franck, art director Patrick Charpenet and



» [PC] *AITD2* features some striking scenes. Though it's running from the same engine, it's a prettier game.

> AITD's visuals were a breath of fresh air, mixing 3D models with detailed 2D backdrops

writer Hubert Chardot to pick up the reins and pull together a new team to create the next chapter in the *Alone In The Dark* saga.

Promoted to the role of project lead, Franck was immediately thrust into the less creative areas of game design. He found this new role challenging, but overall he enjoyed the experience, his only real regret being that he didn't have any time to program anything new for the game, as his time was spent hiring, scheduling and managing.

Franck's programming background would inform his approach to how the team would tackle a sequel, and the ways in which they would set about improving on the original.

"Technically, we focused on improving the technology to have animations in the background and more characters on screen. We did not have time to do much really. We had to build a team of 20-plus from scratch and ship a game in seven months."

Alone In The Dark 2 was created using the same engine as the original, with the team making improvements to it as latent bugs were discovered and fixed. Its story didn't deviate too far from the scenario of the first game; the setting was another grand-looking Twenties mansion, although this time it was a building much larger in scale. It featured many more rooms and even surrounding environments too, including a well-tended garden and a creepy pirate ship buried beneath its foundations.

Set a few years after the events of the first game, Carnby is now a supernatural private eye. He and his partner have been hired to find the whereabouts of a missing child called Grace Saunders, and clues lead them to believe that she may have fallen prey to a notorious mob boss called One-Eyed Jack. When Carnby's partner travels to Jack's mansion to investigate and fails to return, Carnby picks up the trail and sets off to solve the case.

The biggest change to occur in the sequel is that the puzzle and supernatural themes in the first game were toned down, while the action and combat were notably turned up a notch. The zombies and paranormal foes were replaced with armed gangsters and later on zombie pirates, and these enemies were not only far more cunning and intelligent but

able to talk to and shout at the player. Franck explains the rationale behind the change: "This was in 1993 and everybody was playing *Wolfenstein 3D*. *Doom* was just around the corner. So we decided to focus more on the action than the supernatural. Also, I think we only had the *Call Of Cthulhu* licence for the first game, but I might be wrong about that."

The supernatural themes were not completely thrown out, though. Towards the end of the adventure, Carnby learns the truth about One-Eyed Jack. He discovers that the dangerous kingpin and his men are actually pirates that were granted immortality by a witch centuries ago. The catch to their everlasting life, however, is that they must make human sacrifices, and this explains the reason behind Grace's kidnapping. Without wanting to give the ending of *AITD* away, the story actually has a strong similarity to the first game, the correlation coming from occult-dabbling pirates, thirsting for immortality.

Other changes saw the option to play as a second character dropped, although homage was paid to this aspect through a neat section of the game that saw players assuming control of Grace and having to rescue Carnby. When in control of Grace, the player is unable to wield any weapons so must rely purely on wits to surmount enemies, and the environment appears inflated, both these design aspects taking into account her lack of strength and skewed perspective.



Impressively, despite Franck having to pull together a new team to get the game made, *Alone In The Dark 2* was turned around in just seven months. It was originally released for the PC in 1993, and although it didn't meet with the same level of success as its predecessor, many fans consider it a solid continuation. Some even deem it the best game in the series.

Even though it lacks the strong Lovecraft elements and has a greater focus on action and combat, *Alone In The Dark 2* is still a creepy, immersive and unsettling horror adventure. It's also larger and far more challenging than its predecessor. In fact, it's not a terribly easy game to get into initially, thanks to a famously difficult opening sequence, which we asked Franck to explain.

"We knew the game had major tweaking issues when it was released," he admits. "The script programmer in charge of the first part of the game made the early fights nearly impossible and quit in the last month of development. I asked management for an extra week to re-tweak this whole area, but they refused. In fact, they didn't really want to hear about any tweaking at all. The focus back then was to capitalise on the success of the first game as soon as possible, not to maintain its quality level."

AITD2 was successful enough for Infogrames to later release an enhanced console port, dubbed *Jack Is Back*, and to put a third game into production. *Alone In The Dark 3* (1994) was the last game in the series to utilise the original *AITD* engine and, with a new Wild West theme, saw Carnby scuffling with zombie cowboys instead of pirates.

Like Raynal before him, Franck took the decision to leave Infogrames and the franchise after leading his chapter to completion. He left for the US pretty much the day after *AITD2* shipped and had no involvement in the third game. Today, he can be found at Code Particle. The studio, started a few years ago by Franck and two of his friends, is based in California and is behind websites such as *Call Of Duty* Elite (**elite.callofduty.com**), iPhone applications such as Viddy (**www.viddy.com**), and also participates in the development of various videogames.

Though it was a challenging and demanding period of his life, Franck looks back at his time on the *AITD* franchise with fondness, saying: "The entire experience of working on both *AITD* games was amazing. The people were great, the challenges were great and we overcame them together."

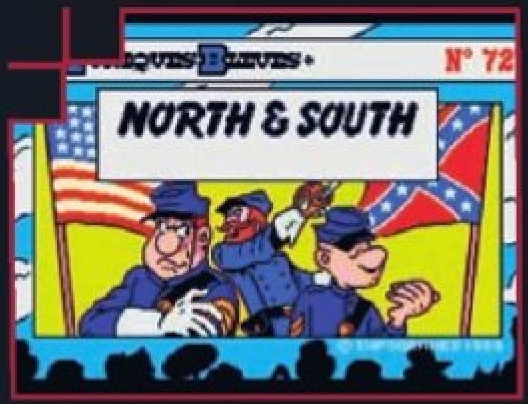
We finish up by asking Franck the million-dollar question: without *AITD*, would we have ever seen the birth of the survival horror genre?

"I think that survival horror games would have definitely appeared at some point, with or without *AITD*. When I first played *Resident Evil*, I honestly thought it was plagiarism; I could recognise entire rooms from *AITD*. But over the years they have done a great job of evolving the genre and have now become the standard."

Special thanks to www.**GOG.com** for their help with this article





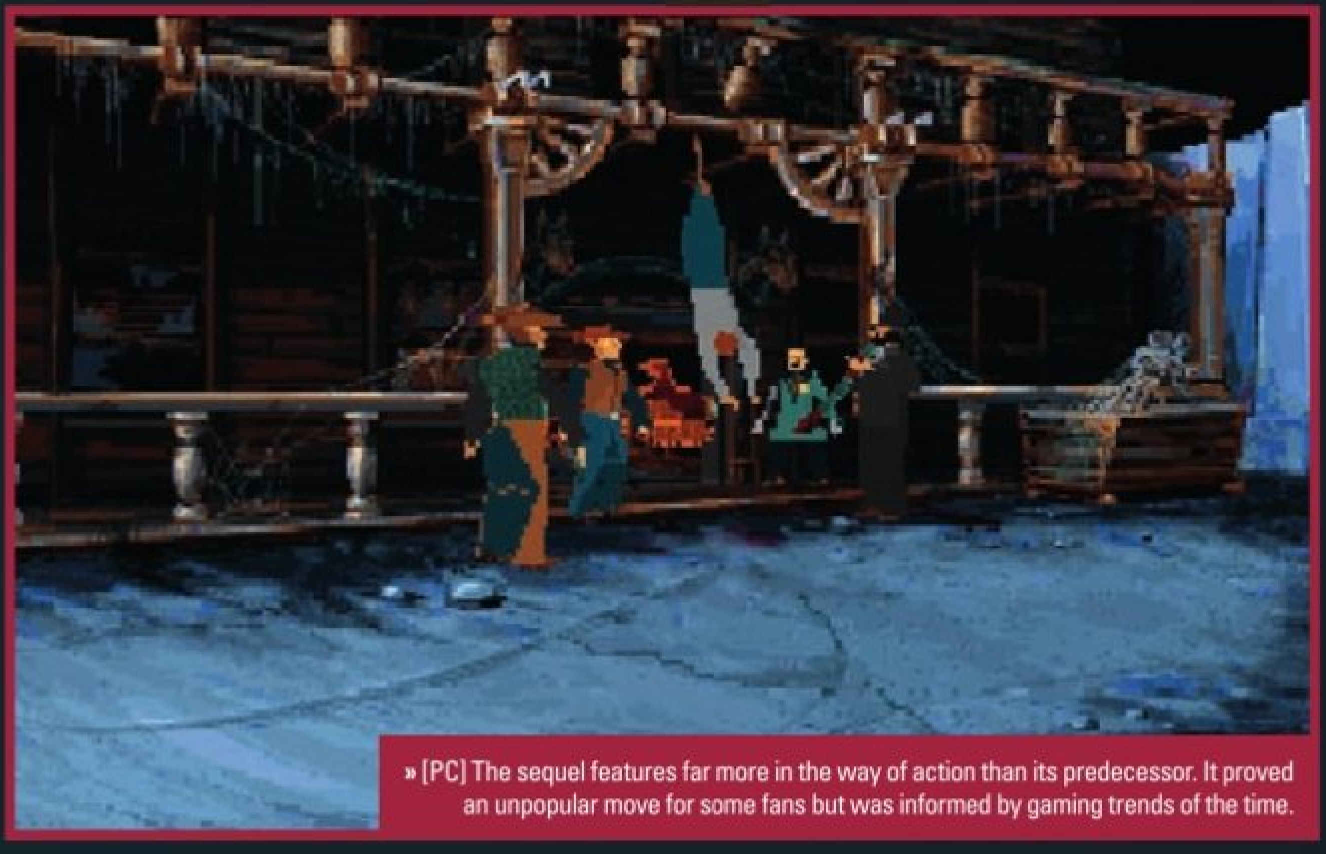


DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

NORTH & SOUTH (PICTURED)
SYSTEMS: AMIGA, C64, CPC, MSX, PC, ZX SPECTRUM
YEAR: 1989

HOGS OF WAR
SYSTEM: PLAYSTATION, PC
YEAR: 2000

BUBBLE GHOST
SYSTEM: CPC, C64, PC, ST, AMIGA, GAME BOY
YEAR: 1988



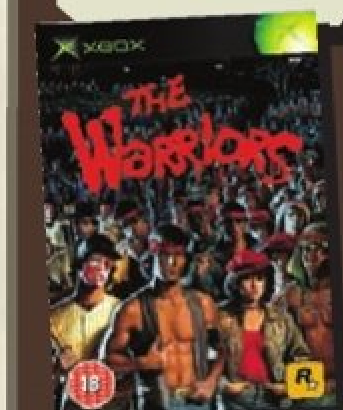
» [PC] The sequel features far more in the way of action than its predecessor. It proved an unpopular move for some fans but was informed by gaming trends of the time.



Future Classic



Modern games you'll still be playing in years to come





INFO

- » **Featured System:** Xbox
- » **Year Released:** 2005
- » **Publisher:** Rockstar
- » **Developer:** Rockstar Toronto
- » **Key People:** Greg Bick (creative director), Steve Donohoe (sound/music design), Kevin Hoare (technical director)

GO DEEPER

- » **In Manhattan, promotional stickers of *The Warrriors* logo were dotted around the streets to promote the game.**
- » **Beating *The Warriors* unlocks an arcade machine, styled as a 2D side-scrolling beat-'em-up.**

THE WARRIORS

18.

Rather than taking the traditional route for a licensed adaptation, Rockstar plucked the Walter Hill classic years after its 1979 release and converted it into an epic co-op brawler

THE BACKGROUND

Rockstar's first and, to date, only game based on a TV or movie property, the company chose to adapt *The Warriors* partly due to the film's overall similarities to a videogame. That is, the journey of a wanted gang moving across a volatile New York on their way back to the safe turf of Coney Island, avoiding the other colourful gangs along the route. In an interview with The New York Times in 2005, Rockstar VP Dan Houser explained that it took approximately 50 people to make *The Warriors* over a four-year period.

The idea was to create a brawler that paid homage to the likes of *Streets Of Rage* and *Double Dragon*, but making it accessible to anyone who was new to the genre, as well as making the most of being able to operate in a 3D space. Despite keeping rookies in mind, however, Rockstar wanted *The Warriors* to be complex enough under the surface to encourage strategic play. Scale was important to the fighting, too – *The Warriors* would be able to support a lot of units on-screen at once, capturing the essence of the fight scenes in the film. Many actors from the film reprised their roles, including James Remar, but perhaps just as importantly, the memorable music from the 1979 picture made it into the game, including Joe Walsh's iconic 'In The City'.

THE GAME

Few videogame adaptations of movies actually build on their sources, but *The Warriors* convincingly sets three quarters of its span before the actual movie section begins – at the start of the film, gang truce figure Cyrus is shot dead during an impassioned speech, before The Warriors' leader Cleon is wrongfully blamed and killed for the assassination. In the game, we flash back to several months before that, seeing how The Warriors became a force in Coney Island and made enemies out of their fellow anarchists, as well as letting players steep themselves in its decayed, almost post-apocalyptic vision of New York.

It's a perfect excuse to let players bottle people, break into stores, steal car radios and perform other satisfying acts of mayhem in environments where a fight could kick off at any second. *The Warriors* is great fun due to the fact anything on the ground, from a pipe to a beer bottle to a pair of brass knuckles, can be employed in a brawl to deal some

Things of note











Toronto Dreamin'

The Warriors turned out to be Rockstar Toronto's only original title, with the developer mainly porting other Rockstar titles to PC and Wii since its release.

Voices of Coney Island

While many of the cast members reappear in their roles, some were replaced – *Paul* actor Joe Lo Truglio plays both Vermin and Birdie over their original actors.

Multi-brawl

The Warriors' arena-based multiplayer was cited as an area of weakness for the game – and fair enough, it's not quite the equal of the campaign.

Handheld fighters

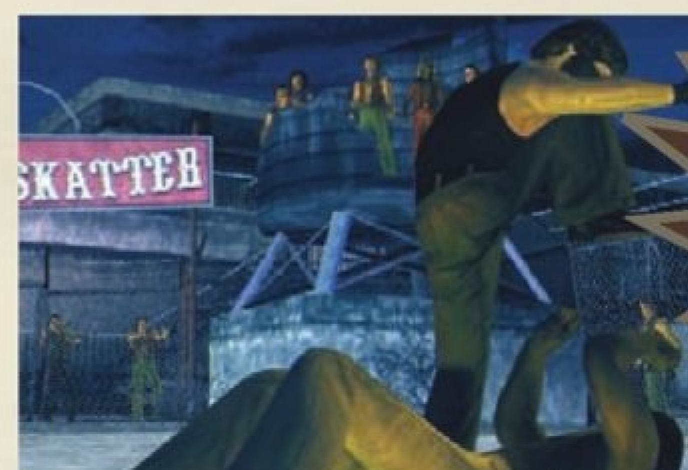
The Warriors' port to the PSP is hugely impressive, and we recommend tracking it down – the entire console experience is intact, with an intuitive control scheme.

Failed follow-up

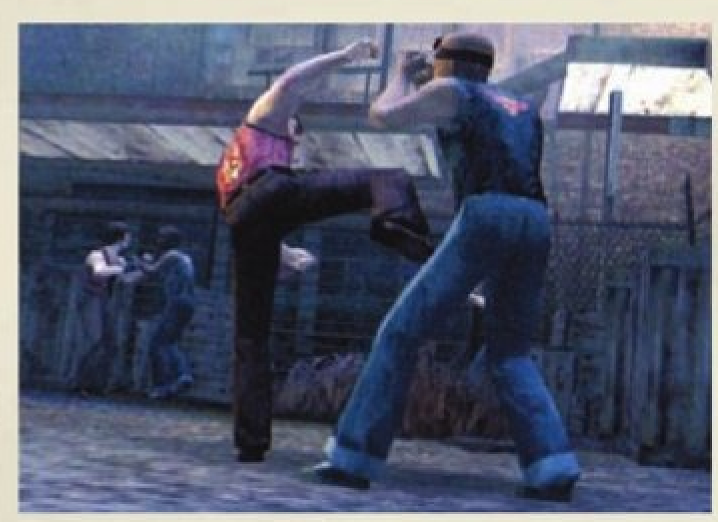
With the licence no longer in Rockstar's hands, Paramount released *The Warriors: Street Brawl* in 2000, a traditional take on the film that received scathing reviews.



» [Xbox] More a story device in the film to spark The Warriors' drive for revenge, in the game Cleon is established as the alpha of the gang.



» [Xbox] This might be the last licensed game Rockstar ever makes – a shame, since it handled the source material so well.



What the press thought

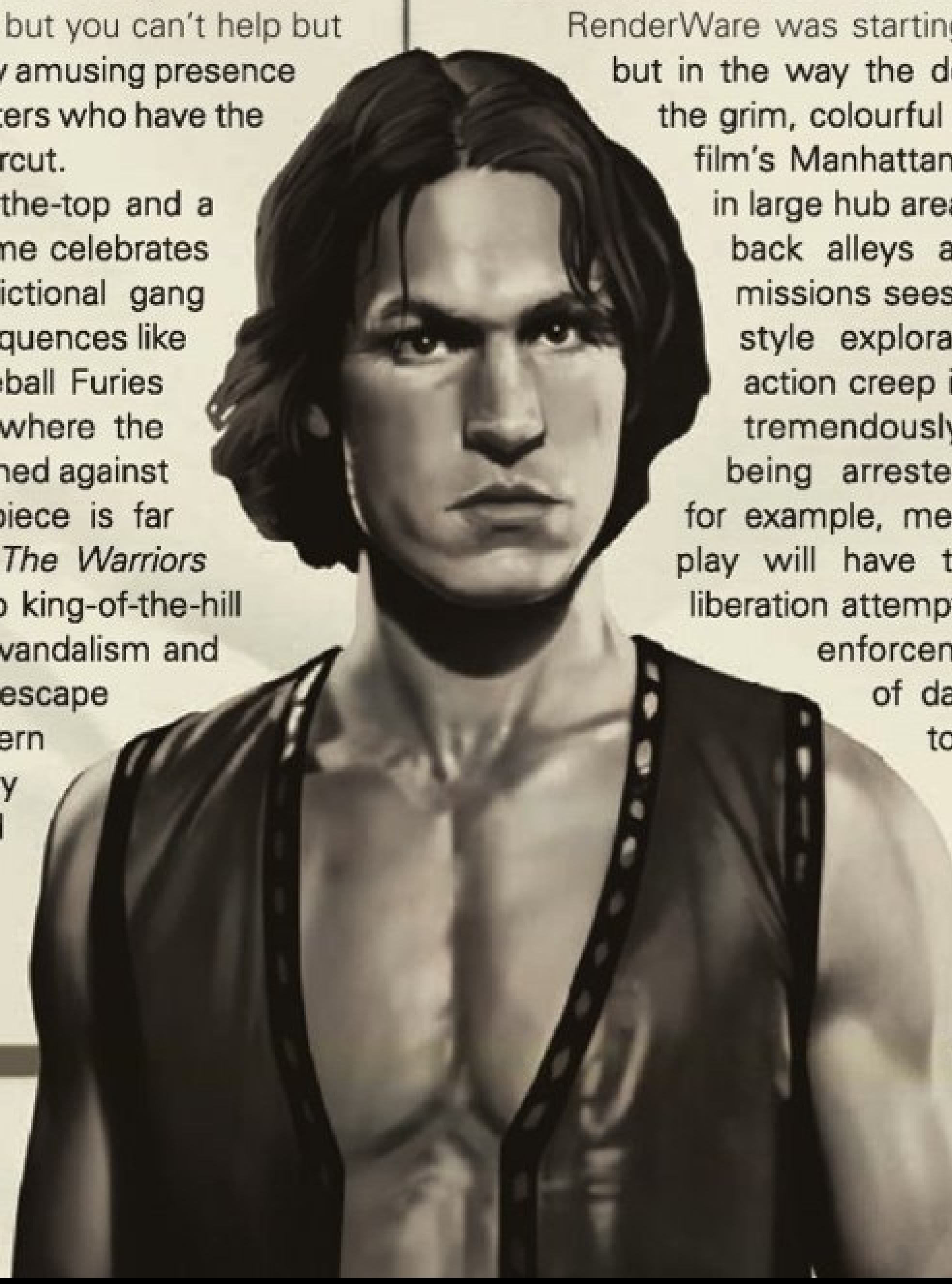
games™
Score: 7/10
"For every awful moment in *The Warriors*, there are two great ones. The mix of story, nostalgia and out-and-out combat is a heady concoction and when it all clicks, it's thoroughly enjoyable."



GamePro
Score: 9/10
"The essence of *The Warriors* is combat, and it's the first game in ages to truly nail it."

real damage. Contextual and co-op-centric attacks, too, deliver deadly moves where enemies can be ploughed into walls with devastating animations to match. It's so gratuitous, but you can't help but enjoy it, aided by the vaguely amusing presence of about half a dozen characters who have the exact same Mark Hamill haircut.

The film itself was over-the-top and a little throwaway, so the game celebrates the inventiveness of its fictional gang culture, turning infamous sequences like the the fight with the Baseball Furies into massive showdowns where the gang's bats are viciously turned against them. The variety of set-piece is far stronger than critics gave *The Warriors* credit for – from lootings to king-of-the-hill brawls to smash-and-runs, vandalism and even a *Matrix*-style rooftop escape sequence, it carries a modern design intent with gameplay that is deliberately retro and easy to get to grips with.



It's so faithful to the accomplished art direction of the films, too, that it keeps the trashy Seventies quality intact. *The Warriors* looks great, not necessarily on the technical side (Rockstar's use of RenderWare was starting to show its age), but in the way the developers captured the grim, colourful gang culture of the film's Manhattan. Levels take place in large hub areas, where exploring back alleys and attacking side missions sees some of the *GTA*-style exploration and dynamic action creep in, as well as being tremendously co-op friendly: being arrested by the police, for example, means that the other play will have to stage a daring liberation attempt in the face of law enforcement. That sense of danger is again true to the movie. Yet *The Warriors'* appeal always comes down to the bloody simplicity of the fighting, and the way experimentation is encouraged by the sometimes labrynthine hub levels and scattering of objects waiting to be belted around some poor sucker's head.

WHY IT'S A FUTURE CLASSIC

The Warriors succeeds in two vastly different ways; first, as a credible companion piece to the pretty-decent-but-not-amazing film that it's based on, but also as a co-op brawler where using the tools around you in a 3D space could be a hell of a lot of fun. It's a refined, satisfying bloodbath that actually makes sense in the context of the licence that it's based on.

The extra 75 per cent of the game's story almost feels like the part of the movie that wasn't there, the build-up to Cyrus's death that never happened because the film was in such a rush to fit all the different gangs in. It also doesn't affect your enjoyment of the game whatsoever if you've never seen *The Warriors* before. By itself, as a result of balanced fighting mechanics and an oppressive atmosphere, it's a distinctive brawler that iillustrates the merits of picking the right licence to all developers.



FROM THE ARCHIVES

RETRO GAMER DIGS UP THE FILES OF THE CLASSIC COMPANIES OF OLD

Rainbird Software

Rainbird Software was Telecomsoft's second major publishing label, which quickly became synonymous with premium quality and blue boxes. Richard Hewison reminisces with colleagues about the label that published Starglider

British Telecom recruited Tony Rainbird in 1984 to launch Firebird Software. Firebird's first year was eventful – the successful launch, the purchase of Beyond Software from EMAP, bidding for and winning the rights to publish conversions of *Elite* – but Tony felt something was missing from the portfolio. What he came up with was a new publishing label that would be distinct from Firebird Software with regard to quality, content and price, as Tony recalls.

"I believe I proposed the concept of publishing cutting-edge adventures, simulations and utilities on a new label, complete with the Bluebird name and blue packaging," he told us.

As before, Terry Finnegan was asked to create the logo. The large ice-blue bird with the huge wingspan was a perfect companion to the iconic Firebird emblem. However, mirroring the events that led to Firefly Software being renamed Firebird the year before, Bluebird Software was scotched by BT's Intellectual Property Unit. A new name was needed, and Tony Rainbird is keen to point out that someone else came up with the alternative.

"I think it was chief executive Richard Hooper who suggested the name Rainbird," he admits. The name was quickly agreed, but very little money was spent on promoting Rainbird compared to the huge amount BT splashed out on buying Beyond Software just a few months earlier. However, Tony extols the financial commitment that BT made to putting money into the best programming teams ahead of an extensive PR launch. "In order to be profitable it was essential to keep a lid on marketing costs, and so we relied on the PR effort, which often involved the programmers and the award-winning packaging to project the quality image," he explains, before adding proudly: "It's hard to describe the sheer enthusiasm that the programmers held in their own projects. So outwardly Rainbird was not a big spender, but was a solid investor in fledgling UK talent."

INSTANT EXPERT

An American watering equipment company called Rainbird successfully argued in the US courts that it might one day publish computer software, meaning Telecomsoft had to drop the Rainbird Software name in the States in late 1988. It hardly mattered, as BT sold the company just a few months later.

The only Rainbird game released in a cheaper, thinner box was *Fish!* by Magnetic Scrolls. The boxes were so easily damaged that puns relating to battered fish became prevalent around the office.

MicroProse UK immediately ditched the blue Rainbird packaging. It also amended the logo, creating a harder-edged emblem with a border.

The only title left when Rainbird was retired was Mike Singleton's sci-fi strategy title *Starlord*, which was eventually published on the MicroProse label in 1994, almost five years after its development was started.

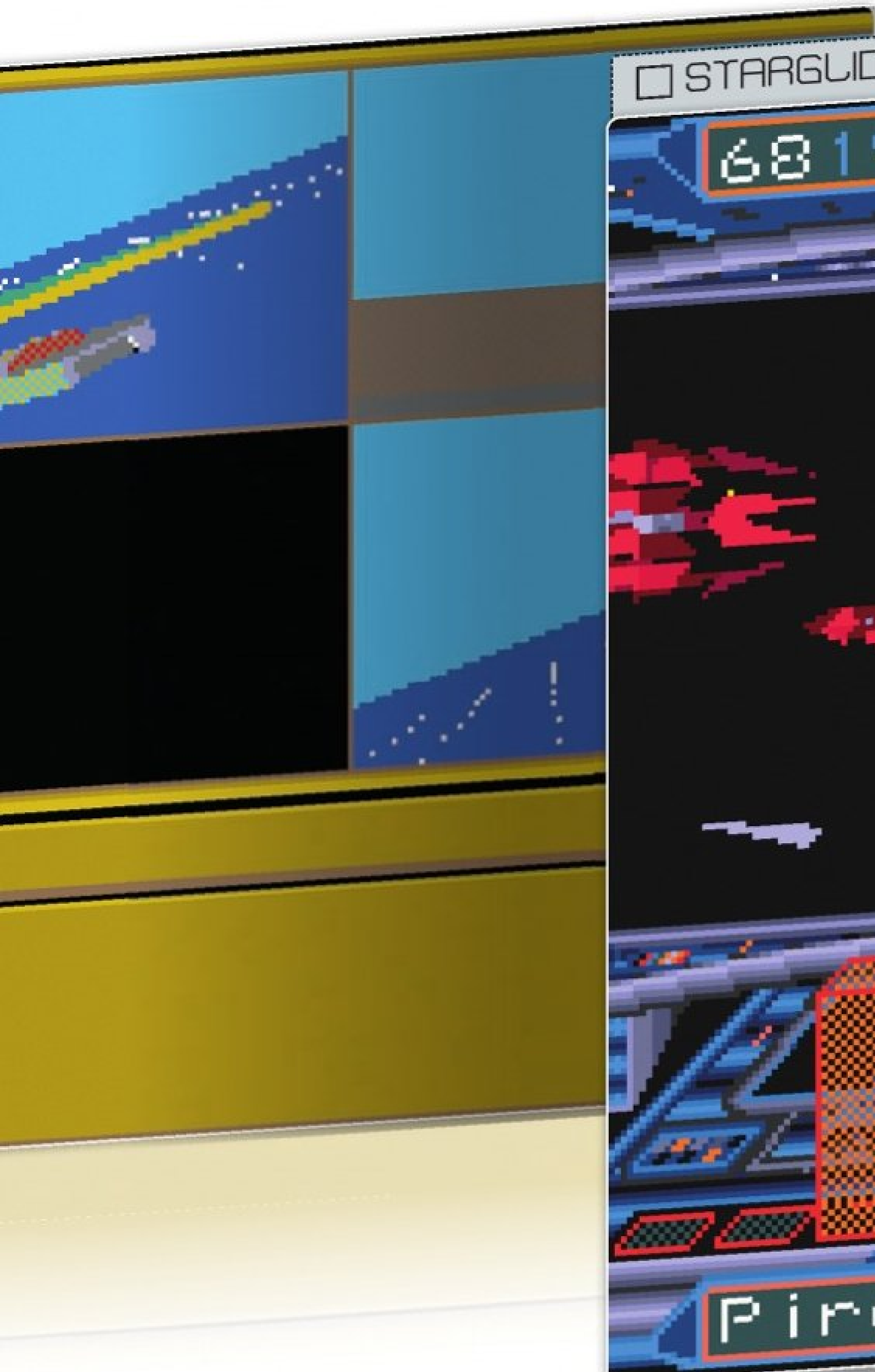
When Telecomsoft signed Graftgold's *Magnetron* (Firebird) and *Morpheus* (Rainbird) from right under Hewson Consultants' nose, it also took the unusual decision to file an ex parte injunction to legally ensure that Hewson couldn't publish any of the unfinished versions of either game that was in its possession. This action delayed final publication by almost six months.

Taking flight

Rainbird's launch titles were an interesting mix of 8-bit and 16-bit products, spread across the genres that Tony felt they should be covering. *The OCP Art Studio* and *The Music System* were among the first to be signed, and it helped that they were both finished utilities that could be published and start earning money quickly.

Oxford Computer Publishing developed *The OCP Art Studio* after programmer James Hutchby saw an Apple Macintosh for the first time, as he remembers: "I admired the Mac but couldn't afford to own one, so instead I tried to do the same thing on a 48K Spectrum."

The OCP Art Studio was advertised by OCP, but when managing director Bill Richardson was contacted by Tony Rainbird, this all changed. A deal was struck to market and distribute the program through BT on the new Rainbird label, as well as produce versions for other platforms.





STARGLIDER 2

"It's hard to describe the enthusiasm of the programmers for their own projects"

TONY RAINBIRD REMEMBERS THE HEADY EARLY DAYS OF RAINBIRD



"BT didn't really require me to change anything, except to add the Lenslok copy-protection system," says James, remembering the unpopular, technically compromised and ultimately short-lived anti-piracy device. James went on to write the Amstrad CPC version, with Chris Saunders tackling the Commodore 64. Rainbird also initiated new 'Advanced' versions for the 128K Spectrum, Commodore 64 and Amstrad CPC. The 128K Spectrum version was upgraded by Dimitri Koveos, who had helped create the mail-order-only *Extended OCP Art Studio*, which allowed users to transfer the program from cassette to a Sinclair Microdrive, KDOS or SPDOS disk interfaces. Later, programmer Chris Hinsley approached Rainbird with a 16-bit art package that became the extremely popular Atari ST version.

To complement OCP's art utility, Rainbird also sought out a music application. *The Music System* was originally developed and published for Acorn's BBC Micro, but Rainbird's deal with the developer Island Logic – a division of Island Records – was for Commodore 64 and Amstrad CPC versions. 'Advanced' disk-only versions were developed for both platforms, featuring a few new features and some additional musical demos.

"*The Art Studio* and *Music System* were signed up as finished programs, but they both suffered from the heavy margins expected by games distributors and retailers at the time, combined with high royalties and low sales compared with games," explains Tony. "They were excellent products so they were good for establishing the Rainbird reputation, but unfortunately they were not so good for making a profit!"

Sadly, this proved to be a contributing factor in OCP's demise, and it went into liquidation in the summer of 1986, shortly after its art package was published.

BY THE NUMBERS

1: The first official Rainbird title was *The Music System* for the Commodore 64

1: *UMS* was Rainbird's first number one title in both the US and the UK

2: Both *Starglider* games were published by Rainbird

3: Three Level 9 Computing titles were published on the Rainbird label before it split when the name was under its ownership

4: Four Rainbird titles published via MicroProse were originally BT commissions

5: MicroProse signed five titles for the Rainbird label

5: Magnetic Scrolls had five text adventures published by Rainbird

6: The Rainbird Software label lasted almost six years in total (1985-1991)

24: Telecomsoft was responsible for releasing 24 Rainbird titles

33: The total number of titles published on the Rainbird label in Europe was 33

Stargliders, Pawns and trackers

On the games front, a handful of potential titles got Tony's attention. The first was from programmer Jez San, who had recently helped David Braben and Ian Bell get up to speed on Commodore 64 development when they were writing *Elite*. As Argonaut Software, Jez and his team were writing what started as an homage to Atari's *Star Wars* 3D vector coin-op, after his advances to Atari about writing home versions were spurned.

The finished product, *Starglider*, set an early high standard for Rainbird on the Amiga and ST with its fast and colourful 3D vectors, arcade action, sampled music and stereo sound effects.

"Originally I wanted to have a glider in space that flew through stargates to propel itself along, and part of the strategy was gliding from gate to gate," explains Jez. "But then I figured this wouldn't be fun if you weren't under your own power

FROM THE ARCHIVES



» [Atari ST] *Verminator* was much more suited to the Firebird label than Rainbird.



TIMELINE

- **1985** — TONY RAINBIRD PROPOSES A NEW PREMIUM QUALITY LABEL FOR TELECOMSOFT
- **1986** — MAGNETIC SCROLLS SIGNS A DEAL WITH RAINBIRD SOFTWARE FOR FIVE ADVENTURES
- **1986** — LEVEL 9 COMPUTING SIGNS FOR RAINBIRD AT CES AT OLYMPIA 2, IN APRIL



WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Tony Rainbird
Today, Tony Rainbird is the managing director of a UK internet service provider. His other main interests are "resolving the UK national debt", which he calculates would take 894 payments of £5 billion/month over 74 years to pay off assuming 2 per cent APR, and "raising his teenage sons". Tony currently runs a Honda CR-Z but has a Nissan Leaf on order.



Graham Wayne
After Rainbird, Graham became an IT journalist and an unofficial Apple evangelist. Leveraging his previous print experience, he worked as a pre-press consultant and a DTI-accredited business consultant specialising in IT, cumulating with his appointment as CIO of the Mastertronic Group. Graham took early retirement in 2007 and now runs a small IT business.

Ricardo Pinto
Ricardo is now a successful novelist who has written the *Stone Dance Of The Chameleon* trilogy – featuring *The Chosen* (1999), *The Standing Dead* (2002) and *The Third God* (2009). He's recently travelled as part of his research for his next novel, which is based in ancient Persia.

Gary Sheinwald
After the sale of Telecomsoft, Gary took charge of production at Audiogenic, before running development at Bits Studios. He then moved to LA as a producer then senior producer at Fox Interactive for six years, then to Warner Bros Interactive and Warner Bros Records as VP of interactive to work on some music-based technology, and is now working on a stealth startup.



Martin Moth
After MicroProse, Martin moved into software development tools such as QSound, BRender and Virtools and from there into websites. With his development and marketing skills he moved into agrichem websites, so instead of 'end-of-level baddies', he helped create commercial websites and online tools such as real-time potato blight display or crop-spray calculators. He is currently running the NHS Direct website, creating online symptom checkers and applications.

because you couldn't just fly anywhere, so I dropped the gliding bit but kept the *Starglider* name."

The Pawn was a text-only adventure game that had already enjoyed critical, if not commercial, success on the Sinclair QL. Developer Magnetic Scrolls, led by Anita Sinclair and Ken Gordon, was naturally keen to port the game onto a platform that had a bigger chance of making a profit. The Amiga and ST computers were based on the same 68000 processor used by the QL, so porting the adventure wasn't a huge technical challenge. However, at Rainbird's suggestion the addition of sumptuous illustrations on most versions for key locations gave Magnetic Scrolls' adventures a much broader appeal.

"The development costs for *The Pawn* were too high for a single product, and it was always going to be the case that the subsequent adventures using the same system would be cheaper to produce," explains Tony. This forward-thinking approach resulted in five adventures from Anita Sinclair and Ken Gordon's company over the next four years, adding *The Guild Of Thieves*, *Jinxter*, *Corruption* and *Fish!* to the success of *The Pawn*.

Gary Sheinwald joined Telecomsoft's games development department in May 1986 and was involved in almost every Rainbird title that Telecomsoft produced, including a futuristic Commodore 64 racing and action game called *Tracker* from new developer Union Software.

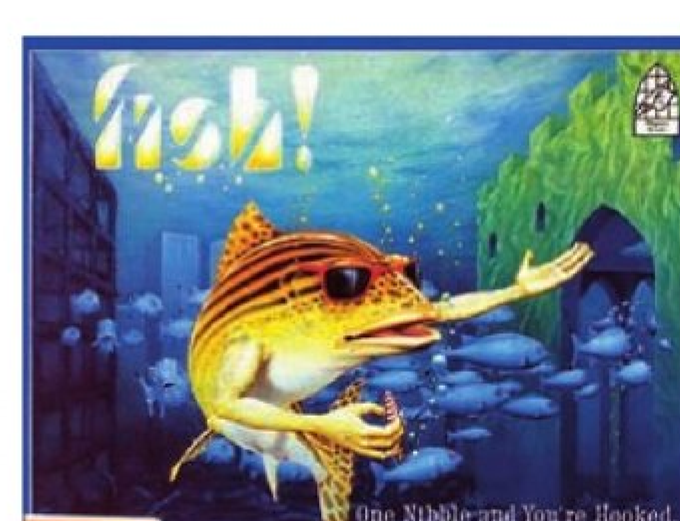
"*Tracker* was in a disastrous state," laughs Gary. "It didn't fit into the Commodore 64's RAM and was incredibly buggy. The pseudo-3D trench portion was practically running at seconds per frame, rather than frames per second!" The original development team had disbanded, so Gary brought in Fouad Katan to rescue the project.

Foo remembers the task quite clearly. "I had to free up around 10K, then finish putting in all the missing bits, fix numerous bugs and put all the pieces back together. I spent about two or three months working on it in the end." Thankfully, the 16-bit versions by Mindware had no such problems. Developed by Nick Leaton, Tony Lambert and Chris van Es, they created an impressive game for the Apple Macintosh, ST and IBM PC that was far better than the original.

"Mindware were Mac-centric for their development environment," recalls Gary, "and the 16-bit versions were based on the core concept of the C64 original – node-based, with multiple enemy AI units – but they diverged quite a lot and went their own way."

The next level

Level 9 Computing was a well-established family-based developer and publisher of 8-bit text adventures when it signed a marketing and distribution deal with Telecomsoft in late April 1986. The deal included four titles spread across 8-bit and 16-bit formats, including updated versions of three existing Level 9 trilogies. Originally known as the 'Middle-earth trilogy', *Colossal Adventure*, *Adventure Quest* and *Dungeon Adventure* were bundled together as *Jewels Of Darkness*. Level 9's science fiction trilogy containing *Snowball*, *Return To Eden* and *The Worm In Paradise* was published as *Silicon Dreams*, while the final trilogy compilation was *Time & Magik*, featuring *Lords Of Time*, *Red Moon* and *The Price Of Magik*.



» Cheaper boxes meant that *Fish!* often suffered a battering.

1986 – TONY RAINBIRD LEAVES IN NOVEMBER TO PURSUE OTHER BUSINESS INTERESTS

1987 – *UMS* BY D EZRA SIDRAN HITS THE NUMBER ONE SPOT IN BOTH THE US AND UK CHARTS

1987 – LEVEL 9 AND RAINBIRD CANCEL THE REMAINDER OF THEIR DEAL

1988 – RAINBIRD PUBLISHES GRAFTGOLD'S *MORPHEUS*

1988 – RAINBIRD RELEASES ARGONAUT'S *STARGLIDER 2*

1988 – PUBLISHER PAUL HIBBARD LEAVES TELECOMSOFT

1988 – MAGNETIC SCROLLS' *FISH!* IS PUBLISHED, CONCLUDING ITS DEAL WITH RAINBIRD

1989 – BT INVITES OFFERS FOR TELECOMSOFT AFTER MBO FAILS

1989 – MICROPROSE (UK) PURCHASES ALL THREE TELECOMSOFT LABELS IN MAY

1990 – *WEIRD DREAMS, VERMINATOR, FIRST CONTACT* AND *BETRAYAL* ARE ALL PUBLISHED

1991 – AFTER RELEASING *ELITE PLUS*, THE RAINBIRD LABEL IS NEVER USED AGAIN

The fourth title in the deal was *Knight Orc*, a three-part adventure written using Level 9's new 16-bit KAOS development system. Unlike its previous games, KAOS – which, bizarrely, stood for '*Knight Orc* Adventure System' – intended to emulate the experience of games like MUDs.

One of Rainbird's game testers was an adventure enthusiast called Paul Coppins, who had previously been a voluntary member of Keith Campbell's Adventure Helpline, helping to resolve adventure queries for EMAP's *Computer & Video Games* magazine in print and in person at the various public computer shows. Rainbird recruited Paul because he was notoriously tenacious when it came to testing adventures, and he regularly inadvertently upset the Austins at Level 9.

"Paul Coppins drove them bonkers!" laughs Graham Wayne, who at the time was in charge of the testing team at Telecomsoft as well as being responsible for liaising with Level 9. "However, he was the best tester I ever worked with. What I remember best were the enraged phone calls from the Austin brothers, complaining about the ridiculous things Paul was doing with their games. He had a way of breaking games in general that was as elegant or mad as it was ingenious. I think he was at his best on the text adventures, but he could break pretty much anything if he put his mind to it!"

Various problems frayed the working relationship between Rainbird and Level 9. *Jewels Of Darkness*, *Silicon Dreams* and *Knight Orc* were all published, but they parted ways before *Time & Magik* could be finished. Internally, Rainbird cited bugs and constant delays as the reason for the premature end, while Level 9 remained tight-lipped about the experience and quickly moved on to another publisher.

Universal success

Tony Rainbird left Telecomsoft in November 1986, soon after the company moved from corporate BT offices in Upper St Martin's Lane to independent office space in New Oxford Street, just over half a mile away. There were a variety of reasons for his decision to leave, but Tony can look back with a huge amount of pride at what he achieved. Thankfully, the Rainbird label continued to go from strength to strength and is still fondly remembered by fans for the bold, high-quality approach that was taken from the outset.

Former programmer Paul Hibbard was promoted to the position of Rainbird's publisher soon afterwards. Despite the loss of Tony and Level 9, the label had a number of aces up its sleeve. More award-winning adventures from Magnetic Scrolls, a self-mapping graphic adventure called *Legend Of The Sword* from new developer Silicon Software, and a strategy simulator called *The Universal Military Simulator* were all in the works.

UMS was designed and written by D Ezra Sidran, who grew up playing Avalon Hill tabletop war games in the US, and he often had problems finding fellow enthusiasts to battle with, as he recalls: "When the first home computers came out in the Eighties, I knew this would be the solution. It was when I saw a science show on television, which featured computers plotting 3D mathematical functions, that I first got the idea that 3D terrain could be generated on a home computer."

Determined to write a war game simulator, Ezra returned to college and earned a degree in computer animation. By the time he graduated in 1985, he had already coded a proof of concept program that demonstrated 3D terrain and some unit movement driven by simple artificial



» Pete Austin and Anita Sinclair try to hide each other's titles on the Rainbird stand at CES, April 1986.

> **"Realtime really took our ideas and knocked them out of the park!"**
>
> GARY SHEINWALD ON REALTIME'S PHENOMENAL WORK ON CARRIER COMMAND



BATTLE OF THE BIRDS



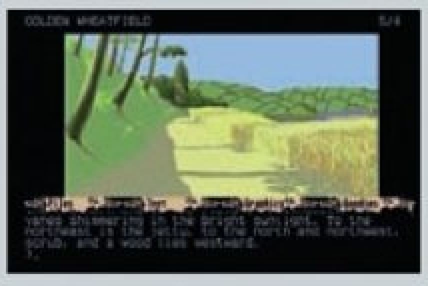
When Rainbird Software was born, it was a separate entity from the Firebird Software label, yet it was based in the same Upper St Martin's Lane office in London. The head of Firebird Software, Herbert Wright, recalls that there was a bit of rivalry between the two camps from the outset.

"At Firebird we called ourselves the GOB team – 'G' for 'Gold' and 'B' for 'Budget'. We were always cordial and respectful to each other, but I was glad when Tony [Rainbird] got his own patch to look after!"



» [Atari ST] Capturing space pirates' cargo in your tractor beam in *Starglider 2*.

SIX OF THE BEST



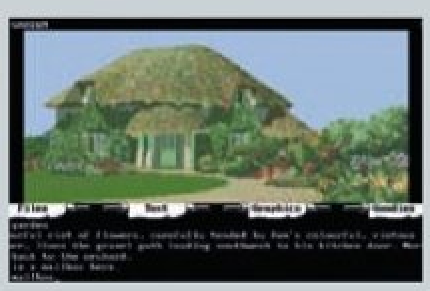
The Guild Of Thieves [1987]
Magnetic Scrolls' follow-up to *The Pawn* returned the player to Kerovnia. Some terrific puzzles, wonderful graphics and a nice sense of humour in the descriptive prose was the cherry on top. A brilliant example of UK adventuring at its best.



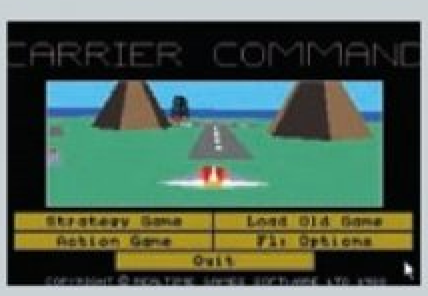
Starglider 2 [1988]
A fast and colourful 3D space game, this featured an entire solar system to explore. Highlights included refuelling from a sun, encountering space whales, battling pirates and searching for bomb components to destroy a space station.



Jewels Of Darkness [1986]
Level 9's trilogy of games started with its expanded version of *Colossal Adventure*, and then got better with each instalment. Basic graphics aside, the expanded text and neat puzzles made this a great challenge for adventurers everywhere.



Jinxter [1987]
Jinxter had a twisted sense of humour – although not as bizarre as *Fish!* – and some great characters and puzzles. Again, terrific graphics and some amusing paraphernalia and script-doctoring from Michael Bywater round it off nicely.



Carrier Command [1988]
Resource management, strategy, immaculate solid 3D and a real futuristic vibe gave *Carrier* all the aces. The later PC edition was actually better than the ST and Amiga versions, featuring much-improved AI routines.



Silicon Dreams [1986]
Snowball, *Return To Eden* and *The Worm In Paradise* were laced with political comment and heavily influenced by literary science fiction. Using the same system as *Jewels Of Darkness*, these expanded versions were well worth a go.

THREE TO AVOID



Verminator [1990]
As an arcade game, this sideways-scrolling platformer didn't fit into the Rainbird ethos at all. It was also far too hard and tricky to play. As for the novella, the rather rambling and at times incoherent story was written in ten days and was awaiting a second draft that never came!



Knight Orc [1987]
KAOS made Level 9's later adventures predictable. Trying to emulate a multiplayer environment meant most puzzles were solved by persuading characters to perform an action simultaneously. Once that was worked out, most puzzles were solved using the same tactic.



Weird Dreams [1990]
With distinctly odd subject matter, phallic imagery and a requirement for pixel-perfect accuracy, *Weird Dreams* just wasn't satisfying, whichever way you looked at it. Exposure on ITV's *Motormouth* couldn't save this weird graphic adventure from being a disappointment.

intelligence routines for the 48K Apple IIe. He sent out dozens of demo disks to publishers and, through a series of events, Ezra was introduced to Marten Davies from Telecomsoft's US publishing label, Firebird Licensees Inc. A few weeks later, Ezra signed a contract to produce *UMS* on a number of formats, including one he had no experience of at all.

"The Atari ST was very big in Europe at the time but practically unheard of in the US," he recalls. "A few days later an ST arrived along with thousands of pages of technical manuals. I had to teach myself the new programming language C, as well as GEM and the Atari operating system, TOS, in just a few weeks!"

Ezra needn't have worried. He wrote the lead ST version in about eight months, and then went on to write a version for the Apple Mac. *UMS* was then ported to the Amiga, IBM PC and the Apple IIGS. It went on to become Rainbird's first title to make it to the coveted number one spot in both the UK and US sales charts, and two 16-bit scenario disks adding new battlefields were released shortly afterwards.

one based on a submarine and the other on an aircraft carrier." Ricardo's aircraft carrier idea was inspired by battles that took place in the Pacific Ocean between the US and Japan during the Second World War. After a show of hands at Rainbird, they chose the aircraft carrier idea.

"The design involved aircraft carriers fighting across an archipelago and a small number of aircraft and amphibious tanks under the player's control," explains Ricardo. He sat down with Ian Oliver, Graeme Baird and Andy Onions in Leeds, and the game evolved from there. However, Ricardo's continued involvement was curtailed when he decided to leave Telecomsoft and work on the other 3D game in development, *EPT*. Creators Adrian Stephens and Andy Beveridge had a 3D system running on the Atari ST but not much of a game design.

"I visited Andy and Adrian in Bristol, cooked them lunch and assessed what state the game was in. What they needed was a proper game design to give the project some direction," recalls Ricardo, who then proceeded to write a very detailed scenario that, in hindsight, was

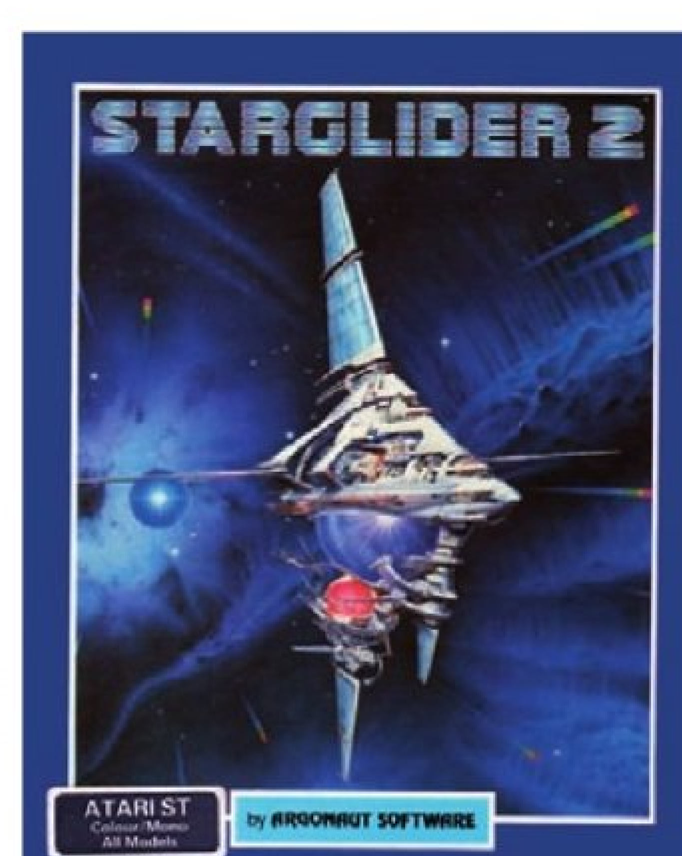
> **"It was really just a case of getting the Telecomsoft titles out as quickly as possible"**
>
> MARTIN MOTH EXPLAINS MICROPROSE UK'S STRATEGY AFTER BUYING TELECOMSOFT

3D threesome

During 1987, Rainbird had three solid 3D games in development. One was Argonaut's *Starglider 2*, another was an epic 3D space opera codenamed *EPT* (*Elite Piss Take*), and the third was a collaboration between Rainbird and Realtime Games, which had recently done a brilliant job of converting *Starglider* for the IBM PC, Spectrum, Amstrad CPC and PCW.

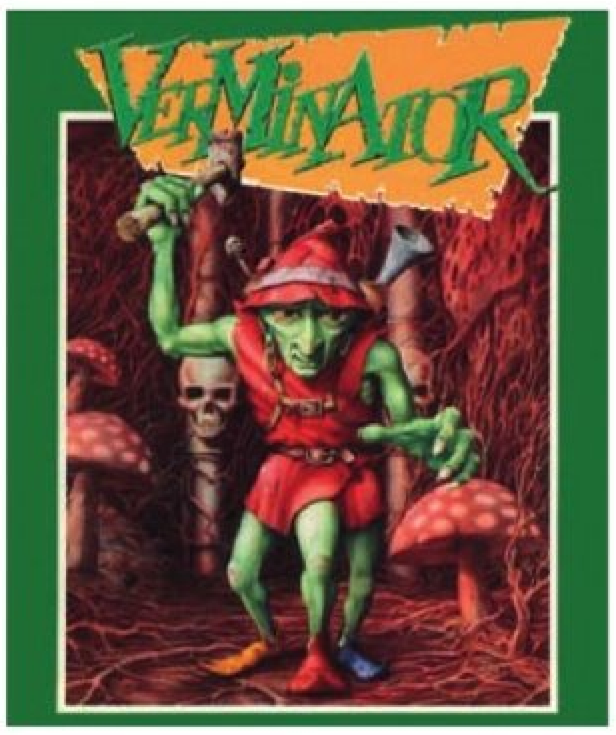
Former Torus and Odracir programmer Ricardo Pinto was working at Rainbird as a project manager when the team was tasked with collaborating with Realtime on a new game. The result was an ocean-faring arcade, strategy and resource-management 3D extravaganza set in the future.

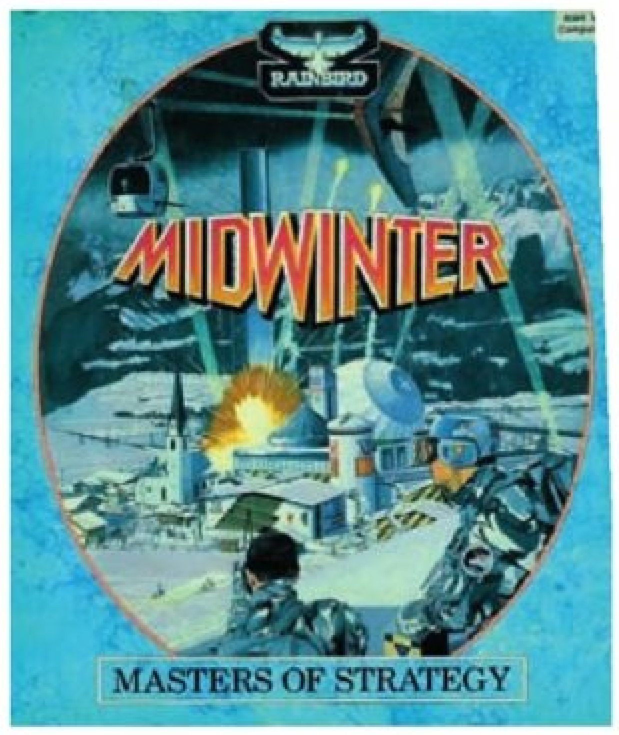
"Paul Hibbard asked me," remembers Ricardo, "and I came up with two notions:





» [Atari ST] It was almost obligatory to have a lush green forest in every Magnetic Scrolls adventure.







» Tony Rainbird and Anita Sinclair share a joke at the Rainbird stand at CES, April 1986.

probably better suited to a sci-fi novel than a computer game.

EPT's protracted development took its toll on Adrian, who had long since lost his creative edge. Sensing this, Ricardo gave him an escape route by negotiating with Rainbird to move Andy to Realtime Games, which was still busy with *Archipelago*. The idea was that the location would give Andy a creative and structured environment with like-minded programmers.

Meanwhile, *Archipelago* was going full steam ahead, with input from a number of other Telecomsoft staff including Graham Wayne, PR guru Clare Edgeley, and Gary Sheinwald, who became heavily involved once Ricardo left.

"I worked with Realtime on design details, and was the day-to-day producer," says Gary, who also named most of the islands and the vehicles. "Realtime really took our ideas and knocked them out of the park," he adds, acknowledging the brilliant job that Ian, Graeme and Andy did. However, as the game was progressing, concerns from marketing meant that a name change was required, much to Gary's chagrin: "We wrote all the possible names up on a whiteboard and had a vote. *Carrier Command* won, beating *Carrier Commander* into second place."

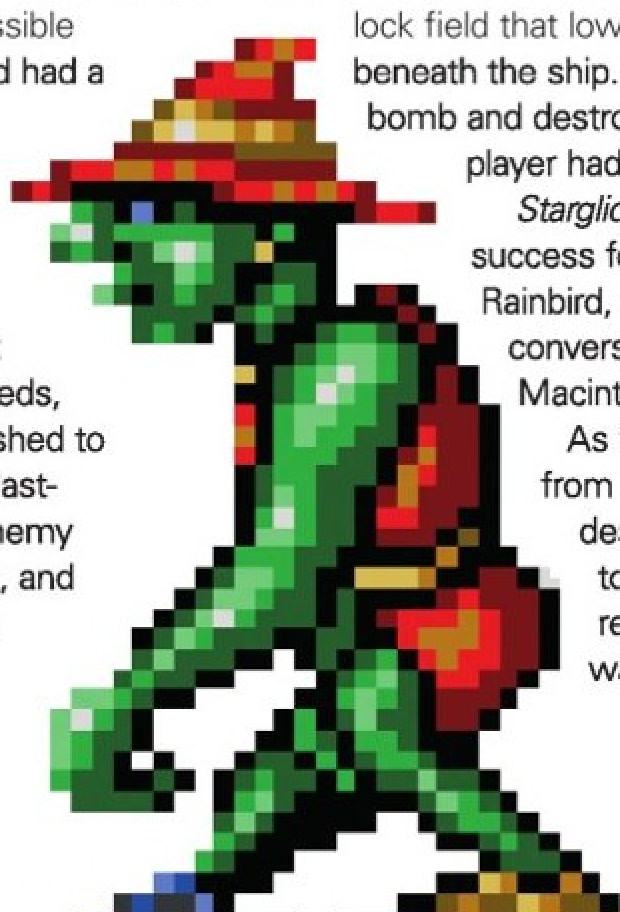
Gary also remembers the rather frantic conclusion to development: "I spent the last week holed up in a hotel in Leeds, tuning the gameplay as we rushed to get it out in time." Part of the last-minute 'tuning' involved the enemy carrier cheating a bit too much, and the inclusion of an accelerated time option to speed up the gameplay. The AI was improved in the later PC and Macintosh versions. Artist Herman Serrano provided the box art, and he produced the loading screen and some of the control panels that appeared in the game. *Carrier Command* was released in early 1988 for the ST and Amiga and was a huge success. Various other versions appeared over the following 18 months, including a particularly impressive effort for the 128K Spectrum.

If the success of *Carrier Command* wasn't already enough, the release of *Starglider 2* later the same year further cemented Rainbird's reputation. Argonaut's sequel boasted a number of firsts, including space-faring blue whales, melting spaceships and a simulated solar system with various planets to explore. The 3D this time was solid and impressively fast.

The game was a race against the clock to construct a bomb powerful enough to destroy a deadly Egron space station. The station was an obvious reference to *Star Wars*, and the documentation went even further, mentioning that the player's ship, the Icarus, came with a Forslook proximity-lock field that lowered the bomb beneath the ship. So, to launch the bomb and destroy the station, the player had to use the Forslook!

Starglider 2 was another success for Argonaut and Rainbird, with additional conversions for the IBM PC, Macintosh and Spectrum.

As for *EPT*, it had gone from having no game design to having too much, and the resulting workload was too overwhelming for one programmer to cope with. In the end, *EPT* fatally stalled and was cancelled.



OFF THE RAILS



A number of Rainbird projects were never finished. One was a powerful text adventure authoring language written by John Jones-Steele called the Rainbird Adventure Implementation Language (RAIL). In development for seven months, RAIL was to be used to create three or four in-house adventures before being released to the public. It wasn't a menu-driven system but a C-style programming language. The commercial death of text adventures caused its premature end in the summer of 1988.

Another was a comic book adventure from Mike Lewis and Carl Cropley called *The Acrobat*, which was a natural 16-bit progression of the games that they had previously collaborated on for the older 8-bit machines.

Space epic *EPT* and the Electronic Pencil Company's isometric RPG *Broadsword* both proved too large for the developers to handle, as did Sandy White's Amiga HAM-mode game *Dick Special: The Search For Spook*.

Mindware started a sci-fi *Dungeon Master* clone called *Lasers And Labyrinths*, but progress was slow and it was eventually cancelled. Terry Greer's graphics reappeared in Pandora's *Xenomorph* for the ST and Amiga the following year.

Finally, Ricardo Pinto was writing a game on the Apple Macintosh called *City States*, which was similar in spirit to Sid Meier's *Civilization*.

Selling up

Having finally made a profit during the previous financial year, BT put Telecomsoft up for sale. The company never fit with the organisation, and so BT management decided to sell it while its profile was high.

A number of buyers showed interest in early 1989 after a protracted management buyout had failed, and the winner was MicroProse UK, which was in the process of launching its new labels, MicroStatus and MicroStyle, as it bought the labels from BT. Martin Moth, MicroProse's PR manager at the time, remembers that manic period.

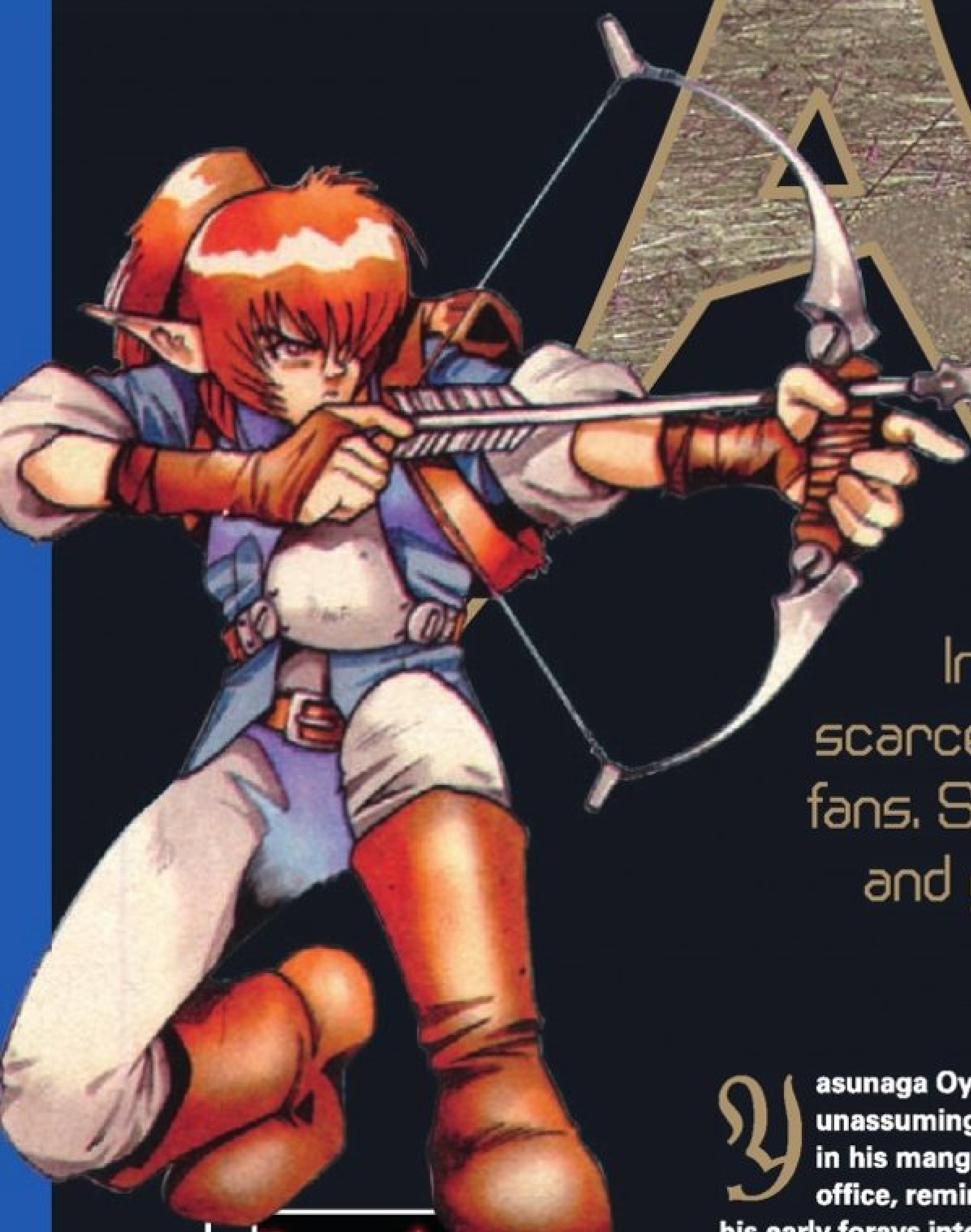
"It was really just a case of getting the Telecomsoft titles out as quickly as possible," he explains, "but where some titles fitted into the new labels we had then fine, we'd take them, else they'd go out under Firebird or Rainbird."

As a result, a few titles switched from Firebird to MicroStyle, but the only title taken away from Rainbird was Graftgold's *Simulcra*. In fact, Rainbird gained a number of high-profile titles, including *Midwinter* and *Midwinter II: Flames Of Freedom* from Maelstrom, Pete Cooke's 16-bit 3D puzzler *The Tower Of Babel*, and the *UMS* sequel.

Rainbird published Chris Sawyer's *Elite Plus* in 1991, which was an update of the original IBM PC conversion of *Elite*, written by Realtime Games for Firebird in 1986. The new version featured much-improved 256-colour VGA graphics and solid 3D objects compared to the vectors in the original release. However, this game proved to be Rainbird's swansong. After five and a half memorable years, Rainbird had made its last flight.

THE MAKING OF

ALUNDRA



In the 32-bit era, top-down action RPGs were growing scarce, but Alundra was holding the fort for 2D adventure fans. Sorrel Tilley tracked down designer Yasunaga Oyama and grilled him mercilessly about his experiences working on the PlayStation's love letter to a dying genre



IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** PSYGNOSIS
- » **DEVELOPER:** MATRIX SOFTWARE
- » **RELEASED:** 1997
- » **PLATFORM:** PLAYSTATION
- » **GENRE:** ADVENTURE

Yasunaga Oyama cuts an unassuming figure as he sits in his manga-strewn home office, reminiscing about his early forays into the pixelated realm of videogaming. "It all started when I had my first go on an Epoch Cassette Vision, back when I was in primary school," he remembers. "After that, I got my hands on Sega's SG-1000 and Nintendo's Family Computer. When I was in junior high school, I bought an MSX; my favourite game was *Metal Gear*. I played all the games in the series after that. I think incorporating movie-like elements into a game was totally groundbreaking, and the mix of sneaking and action was so new. It was then that I became interested in making games, and I started using my MSX to produce simple programs in BASIC."

After graduating, Oyama went straight into the gaming industry, and soon found himself forming a new company, as he recalls. "A collection of staff members were gathered from different companies, and Matrix Software was founded. *Alundra* was our very first game."

Oyama acted as director, but the president of Matrix took him under his wing. "The president came up with the main idea for *Alundra*," he explains, "and I designed the game accordingly. I would consult with programmers, and instruct them on how to implement the control scheme and menus, as well as the icon layout. My own work involved system design, creation of maps and monsters, that sort of thing.

"First we discussed the map and overworld layout with the staff and came up with some concept art. We managed to complete plans for the game scenario in quite short order, so as soon as we were done organising the graphics and maps, we extrapolated the game events from the environment we had come up with. Lastly, everything was finalised after getting the president's approval."

Although Oyama was happy with the smooth running of the planning phase, the development team was soon to be put to the test, and the road that led to the final product was a bumpy one.

When it was eventually released, virtually every review of *Alundra* mentioned the name of another action-adventure series that you may have heard of: *The Legend Of Zelda*. The parallels with the SNES classic *A Link To The Past* are especially obvious, both featuring a detailed overworld, a plethora of dungeons crawling with baddies and bursting with puzzles, weapon-based advancement, and, of course, those ears. *Alundra*'s titular hero finding himself washed up on a beach after a shipwreck is particularly evocative of *Link's Awakening* on the Game Boy, not to mention the dream-hopping aspect, which is key to the plots of both games.

On the surface, frequent references to *Alundra* as *'Zelda* for the PlayStation' may have appeared to be in the game's favour, but the problem was timing. While *A Link To The Past* and its handheld counterpart were wildly successful in their own time and later blossomed into perennial favourites, in the interim, gamers





» [PlayStation] *Alundra* also features action-packed anime intro and ending sequences.







» [PlayStation] The dubious influence of religion plays a large role in the story.

were clamouring for 3D. By the time *Alundra* made its appearance in 1997, *Final Fantasy VII* was already out, and *Ocarina Of Time* was on the horizon. The heavyweight competition was enough to make the team at Matrix Software nervous.

"At the time, we were getting impatient, because so many 3D games were coming out," admits Oyama. "The development was originally planned to take six months, but actually it took nearly four years. When we founded Matrix, I was interested in the PlayStation hardware being able to handle full-blown 3D, but because the assembled team was largely from a 2D background, we settled on a 2D system. However, as development time stretched out, other companies were hurrying many 3D games onto the market. I think at that point there were a lot of interesting experiments going on. Lots of 'one idea' games came out, and it was very exciting."

> The heavyweight competition from Final Fantasy and Zelda was enough to make the team at Matrix Software nervous

Oyama explains that the reasons for *Alundra*'s protracted development cycle were due mainly to the ambitious size of the game itself, and the team's inexperience with the then-new PlayStation hardware: "There was considerable trouble because all the staff members were newcomers to the system. When the company was founded, we only had ten people on the staff roll, but that gradually increased. The scale and scope of the game had escalated from our original plans, so we desperately needed more hands on deck. We ended up with around 40 people working on the project; the new members were mostly set to work on graphics and programming."

Oyama recalls that amid the stress of overwork, the team managed to remain on friendly terms: "There were hardly any personal problems at Matrix, I think because we were mostly former colleagues from different companies. Having said that, we did feel inconvenienced as the staff numbers increased, and the office grew more and more crowded."

Sony's grey box posed problems not only with its unfamiliar hardware, but also with the relatively young CD format. "The first problem we had was the CD access speed," says Oyama. "Because it's a game where you can freely move around the map, random access to the disc was causing too much slowdown – it was wrecking the game. So we came up with a method whereby all the graphical data would be read at once for each map. All that data was put into one large file, which would be partially read each time. This map data alone took up over 400 pages in the file. It was this that caused us to fill the CD's maximum capacity, even though it was quite large for the time.



Career change

ALUNDRA MAY BE known for its dark and gritty story, with characters being killed off at a faster rate than an Agatha Christie novel, but it would be a stretch to describe the game as 'adult', which is why it may be a surprise to learn that Oyama went from game designer to erotic manga artist in one bold move.

"I actually started out at animator school," he explains, "but because I liked games so much, I found my first job in the gaming industry. After I ruined my health, I decided on drawing adult manga as a job I could do from home. Manga is something you create alone, so I feel nostalgic when I think about making games in a team. Working on a project as a group is more enjoyable because your creation can exceed the limits of the imagination of a single person."

THE MAKING OF







"Thankfully, we received plenty of technical advice from Sony. Up until that point we had been making ROM cartridge-based games, so we ran into a few problems because of the differences. In the beginning we all assumed that because we were using CD-ROM now, there probably wouldn't be any issues with the system design or risk of filling the disc capacity. In practice, there were various differences to programming with cartridges, and in the early stages, we came up against a few unexpected difficulties."

Aside from the assistance provided by Sony's technical support, Oyama and the team continued to look for new ways to streamline the development process and speed up production. "After the system was decided, we built tools for creating maps, events, and character animations," he explains. "With these exclusive *Alundra* tools, we were able to check the game's progress on the PlayStation as we went. So we were able to arrange the game's events and maps even without the programmers being present. Aside from graphics, the map tools enabled us to input data on collision detection attributes such as height. Likewise, the character tools allowed us to set the same details for characters and weapons."

Being able to swiftly alter the collision detection data for the maps was of vital importance because of the sheer size of the game world, and the challenge presented by the isometric perspective. A great deal of the game's tremendous difficulty arises from the abundance of pixel-perfect jumps required to progress through the various landscapes and puzzles, often arranged in a deliberately multi-layered fashion. When quizzed on the subject, Oyama reveals that, in contrast to titles like *Final Fantasy IV*, which were made easier for their Western release, *Alundra*'s target audience was in part responsible for its notoriously unforgiving design: "Personally, I prefer my games



on the easy side! But Matrix president Oohori Kousuke is very fond of hard games. There is also the fact that international players want harder games. We expected from the beginning that the game would be marketed around the world, so we tried to bear this in mind throughout development."

The viewpoint allowed for a 3D 'feel' in a two-dimensional, sprite-based world. British players may be more familiar with the style from classic 8-bit home computer games such as *Head Over Heels*, *Batman* and *Knight Lore*, but by the Nineties, Japanese developers were beginning to make use of it in strategy and role-playing games like *Tactics Ogre* and *Vandal Hearts*. The viewpoint also served to visually distinguish *Alundra* from the *Zelda* series. Oyama confirms that "*Alundra* took great influence from *The Legend Of Zelda*" but is quick to emphasise that the game's true heritage lies with Climax



» [PlayStation] Didn't Kurt Russell torch this guy in *The Thing*?

Look who's stalking

WHILE *ALUNDRA* DRAWS frequent comparisons to the *Zelda* series, it actually has a lot more in common with Climax Entertainment's *Stalker* games. After all, Matrix Software was founded by defectors from camp Climax



Landstalker: The Treasure Of King Nole

The heroically named Nigel of this Mega Drive hit, the first in Climax's series, bears a striking resemblance to Alundra. Massive boots? Check. Floppy hair? Check. Pointy ears? Double check.



Lady Stalker: Challenge From The Past

Perhaps owing to the slightly dodgy title, *Landstalker*'s sequel would remain a Japan-only release for the Super Famicom. *Lady Stalker* retains the isometric visual trickery that made the original so frustrating, only this time you play as a lovely lady.



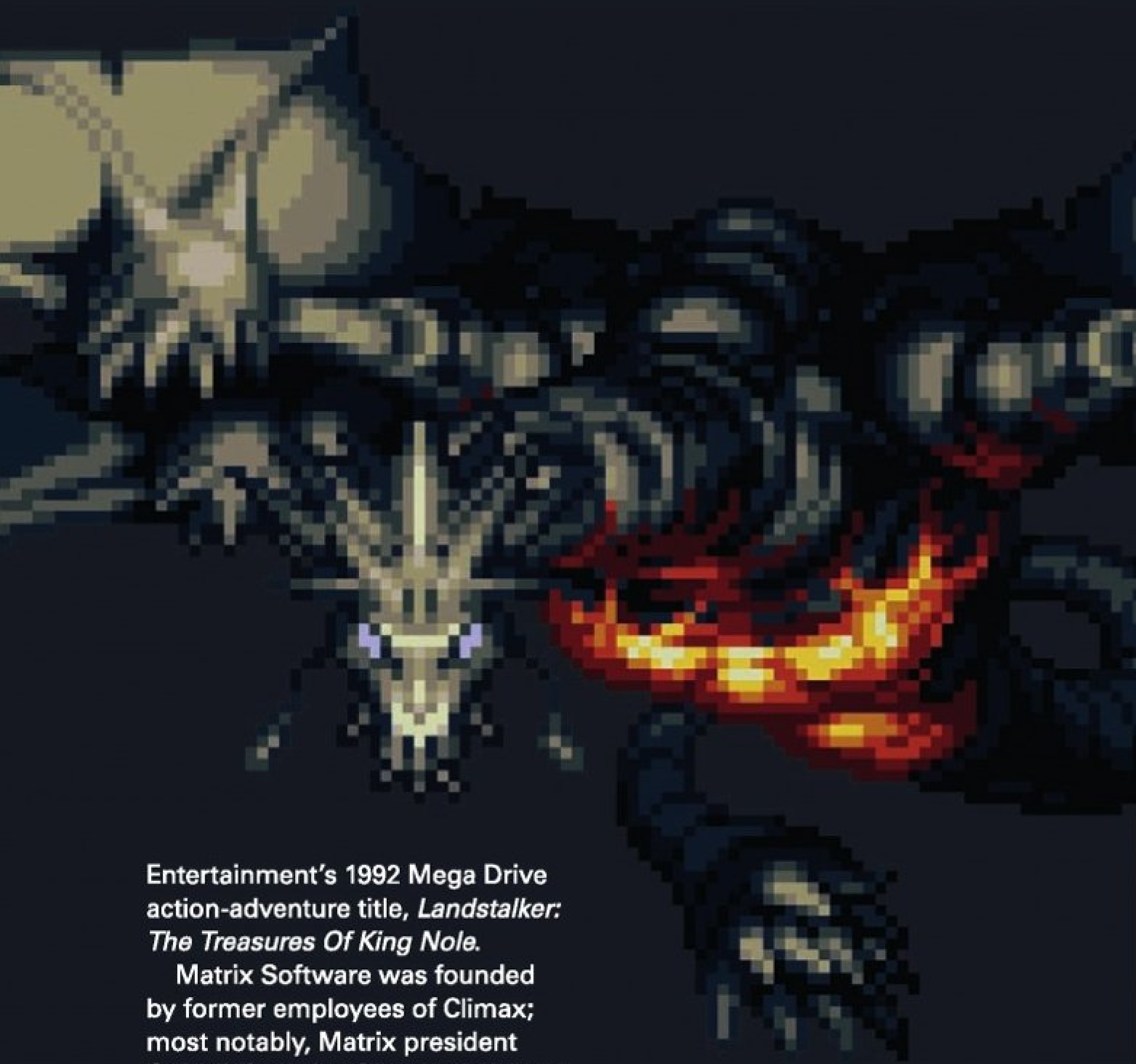
Dark Savior

Apparently nobody got the memo about stalking having to be in the title when it came time for this hidden gem to be released on the Sega Saturn. Not as closely related to the rest of the series, this game was also the first to use true 3D graphics.



Time Stalkers

The most recent *Stalker* instalment was an all-star Dreamcast extravaganza. It featured characters from previous *Stalker* games, as well as from *Shining Force* and *Shining In The Darkness*. It was also a bit of a *Pokémon* rip-off, featuring a monster-collecting gimmick.



Entertainment's 1992 Mega Drive action-adventure title, *Landstalker: The Treasures Of King Nole*.

Matrix Software was founded by former employees of Climax; most notably, Matrix president Oohori Kousuke. Climax continued to make sequels in the same vein as *Landstalker*, while Matrix tasked itself with creating a more advanced spiritual successor to the Mega Drive original. "President Kousuke was a staff member on *Landstalker*, so he wanted to challenge himself with things that could not have been done in the past," Oyama says. He also explains the move away from the true isometric perspective used in that game: "*Landstalker*'s controls were seen as frustrating because of the slanted top-down perspective. Other than that, there were certain things that could not be done in relation to the main system, so you could say that we built *Alundra* with a view to solving those problems. We were also happy to be able to implement multi-jointed enemies, such as the centipede-like Corpse Worm boss."

Sadly, the pressure of the intensified production schedule and the race to complete the game before it was eclipsed by its rivals took its toll on the staff, as Oyama explains: "Unfortunately, I was young at the time, and I pushed myself too hard, and in the final stages I wore myself out and became ill. It's still a great regret that I couldn't see the project to the very end. I left supervision of the maps and events to President Kousuke." Oyama felt comfortable that he had left the project in safe hands: "I wouldn't say that everything was completed, but it was fairly close, I think. I'm proud of the high level of interactivity and the vastness of the map I managed to accomplish before I left." The collaborative effort involved meant that the loss of the designer would not cause the game to lose focus: "Because the team was full of people who were passionate about games, *Alundra* was made with every member pitching in ideas."

In the end, Oyama was optimistic about *Alundra*'s chances: "I think we were glad that we were working on a game that was focused on action, and which was different to *Final Fantasy*-type RPGs. It's more enjoyable when you control your character directly, and guide him through obstacles and enemies yourself. It may be tough, but I think it's a game that gives you a great sense of accomplishment when you finally clear it."

> Alundra took great influence from Zelda, but the game's true heritage lies with Climax Entertainment's Landstalker



» [PlayStation] Matrix made good use of the PlayStation's transparency effects.







DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

ALUNDRA 2
SYSTEMS: PLAYSTATION
YEAR: 1999

FINAL FANTASY III
(PICTURED)
SYSTEMS: NINTENDO DS
YEAR: 2006

NOSTALGIA
SYSTEMS: NINTENDO DS
YEAR: 2008



Thanatos

DRAGON AGE ORIGINS

» RETROREVIVAL

» ZX SPECTRUM
» DURELL SOFTWARE
» 1986

The first computer game I remember playing was a Durell title. Excitedly opening the Amsoft twelve pack of promotional games bundled with my Amstrad (over £100 worth of software apparently, which by my calculations would price *Bridge-It* at a staggering £8.33) it was *Harrier Attack* I decided to load up first.

Since then I have been a staunch fan of the company's games. From making nail-biting aircraft landings in the aforementioned *Harrier Attack*, to closing down drug deals in the immersive *Turbo Esprit*, the developer's games always seemed to nail originality and atmosphere brilliantly, so whenever it put out a new game I made damn sure to get it.

Mike Richardson's *Thanatos* is one of my favourites, a game that is showy, simple, wonderfully crafted and still impresses today. It invites you to take up the role of a giant, fire-breathing dragon, the titular Thanatos, and embark on a perilous mission to rescue an important sorcereress kidnapped by an evil lord and imprisoned in a far away castle. Well, not that far, to be honest… you reach her at the end of the first stage. From here, you set off to retrieve her important belongings, which hold the key to restoring peace to the land.

Unfortunately for Thanatos though, dragons don't have the best of reputations, especially in 400 CE or whenever the game is set, so as well as natural ecological dangers like falling rocks and stalactites, he must avoid fearsome sea monsters, annoying gulls, giant wasps, and foolish peasants that try to knock him out of the sky with arrows and rocks. Of course, mere men are no match for Thanatos, who can singe them into next week with his fire breath or pick them up in his powerful talons.

The first thing that is notable about *Thanatos* is how gorgeous it looks. The dragon sprite is bloody huge and animates as you would expect, slowly making his way across the scorched land by foot or taking to the skies, flapping his giant wings and gradually picking up speed. And though there isn't much to the gameplay, it doesn't matter, as *Thanatos* achieves exactly what it sets out to do: getting a humble 8-bit computer to snarl loudly. *





SEGA GA





It may have been outsold by the Game Boy, but the Game Gear can in no way be considered a flop – it survived for seven years and over 11 million systems were sold. Matt Gander hopes to move your Game Gear knowledge up a gear



» **Manufacturer:** Sega » **Models:** Sega/Majesco » **Launched:** 1990 (Japan), 1991 (US, Europe) » **Country of Origin:** Japan

ME GEAR

The Collector's Guide







» The smaller boxes and nicer art of Japanese Game Gear games can be desirable.





WHY IT'S COLLECTABLE

Released in Japan in 1990 and discontinued in 1997, with the last game being the US-only *Jurassic Park: The Lost World*, the Game Gear certainly lived a long life. It wasn't all smooth sailing for the system, though, with many Japanese developers and publishers choosing to support the incredibly popular Game Boy instead, meaning the Game Gear's release schedule was staggered at best.

In Europe only 196 games were released for the battery-draining device. The majority of these were released in 1993 and 1994 when the system was in its prime, but as you can imagine, with only a relatively small number of games released for it, the system never received the same press coverage as the Master System or Mega Drive. Most magazines of the era only devoted two or three pages to it per issue, as a typical month saw a couple of new releases at most. The closest it ever got to a dedicated magazine was a pull-out section titled 'G-Force' in the short-lived *Sega Master Force*.

Sega did a good job of keeping the Game Gear in the public's eye by releasing five exclusive *Sonic* titles: *Sonic Triple Trouble*, *Sonic Labyrinth*, *Sonic Drift*, *Sonic Blast* and the spin-off *Tails Adventure*. There was a steady slew of high-quality Disney titles too, while after Master System support fizzled out more Mega Drive conversions appeared like *Ristar*, *Earthworm Jim* and *Dynamite Headdy*.

Codemasters arrived late to the Game Gear party, but it showed up with a bang, bringing *Micro Machines*, *Dizzy*, *CJ Elephant* and more to the handheld. Acclaim, which published under the Flying Edge label early on in the Game Gear's life, also offered heavy support and supplied the system with its more mature titles, such as *Mortal Kombat*, *Alien 3*, *Judge Dredd* and *RoboCop Versus The Terminator*.

Over in the US, 233 titles were released, and the list of games that never made it to Europe often raises eyebrows. We're not just talking about US sports titles here, but rather the big-name likes of *Mega Man*, *Shining Force*, *Star Trek*, *Pinball Dreams*, *Choplifter III*, *Jungle Strike* and a wealth of Marvel comic book tie-ins. Oddly, although three different *Pac-Man* games were released on the format, not one of them made it to Europe.

Purely by coincidence, 196 is also the number of games released in Japan. Sega's homeland didn't just have its own exclusive titles, including dozens of RPGs like *Magic Knight Rayearth* and numerous *Puyo Puyo* games, but also a range of different coloured systems. The most desirable of these is a white Game Gear, which came with a matching TV tuner and stylish white carry case. Europe was never treated to any coloured systems other than the original black model, while America received just one: a fetching blue number, which came bundled not with *Sonic*, as you may have expected, but with *The Lion King*.

Ultimately, it's the Game Gear's region-free nature that is the biggest draw to collectors, allowing instant access to the many games denied a European release.



» Understandably, boxed games in good condition are more collectable, with some later titles, produced in limited numbers, being extremely rare.

» Unboxed games can be very cheap to acquire today, making building a library fairly economical.







DID YOU KNOW?

■ The Japan-only *Kuni-Chan's Game Paradise* was set within the walls of *Castle Of Illusion* and featured characters from Mickey's classic romp, including Mizrabel the witch. Mini-games featured here were later reused for the Europe-only *Sega Game Pack 4-In-1*, including a tennis game in which Sonic is the umpire. It was also the first Game Gear game to feature the blue blur, beating *Sonic The Hedgehog* to Japanese shop shelves by just over a month.

Compared to some systems it's an inexpensive format to start collecting – the majority of titles will only set you back a few pounds each if they're unboxed. If you're going to go for a full set of boxed titles, though, you'll need both time and money, as some of the later European releases are incredibly scarce, with copies appearing on eBay only once or twice a year.

As is usually the case, Japanese box art is more alluring than the Western efforts, and games came in much smaller boxes. Later US releases were branded with garish purple borders, but this fortunately wasn't the case for Europe. Indeed, it would seem that Sega had no protocols for third-party packaging other than the fact that the box had to display the Sega Game Gear logo somewhere. This allowed for some incredibly diverse packaging.

The Game Boy may have savagely beaten the Game Gear when it came to sales figures, but Sega's system did have a bootleg scene that was a whole lot more interesting. Although Game Boy bootleg cartridges did exist, they would only contain a handful of Game Boy games and sometimes hacks of existing ones. Game Gear bootleg cartridges, on the other hand, would often include Master System and Japanese SG/Sega Mark III games, thanks to the fact that the Game Gear had very similar hardware. The bootleggers of the day must have had their fingers on the pulse, as they often chose to pirate Master System games that weren't available on the Game Gear, such as *Michael Jackson's Moonwalker*, *Altered Beast*, *After Burner* and *Alex Kidd In Miracle World*. Cartridges featuring Korean games have also been found over the years, some of which contain a clone of *Super Mario Bros* known as *Super Boy II*. Don't get too excited, though – the screen moves so erratically that it's not much fun to play.

There aren't many systems that get a second chance, but in 2001 the Game Gear managed to get just that. Majesco released a new model in the US alongside a dozen re-released games, including *Pac-Man*, *Sonic The Hedgehog 2*, *Sonic Chaos*, *The Lion King* and *The Jungle Book*. The re-released games are very easy to find, often appearing on eBay still sealed in shrinkwrap. In fact, many of these were spotted in pound shops up and down UK high streets just a few years ago. The newer model of the hardware is somewhat tougher to find but is worth the effort to track down; although the overall build quality is poorer than that of the original, the screen is brighter and less prone to blurring. Majesco systems are easy to spot due to having a darker casing and monochrome Game Gear logo on the left of the screen instead of a coloured one.

Never mind tracking down a Majesco system – fully working Game Gears of any description can be difficult to find. The majority of systems are now suffering from screen and sound problems due to the capacitors inside dying. Fortunately, spare capacitors are cheap to buy and can be replaced relatively easily using a soldering iron. If your soldering skills are lacking, then we can't think of a better reason to master the art than to revive an old Game Gear and play the many 8-bit hits it has to offer.

THE PERIPHERALS



» What's inside? Not much – just the device itself and a warranty card. Instructions for use are printed on the reverse of the box.



» It may look bulky, but it's light enough to barely increase the weight of the handheld once plugged in.



MASTER GEAR

By purchasing one of these, the Game Gear's library of games doubled in an instant – it allowed the Master System's back catalogue to be played. If you already owned a Master System prior to purchasing a Game Gear, this was pretty much an essential accessory, as the games you already owned could now be played while on the move.

Even if you didn't own a Master System, it was still essential, as many of the console's best games never made it to the Game Gear. The entire *Alex Kidd* series, *Rampage*, *Asterix*, *Psycho Fox*, *Wonder Boy II*, *Ghostbusters*… We could go on for a long time yet.

It's easy to forget how appealing the Master Gear would have been for American Game Gear owners too. In the US, the Master System was killed off in 1991, with the last game being *Sonic The Hedgehog*. The existence of this peripheral allowed them to play the countless Master System games that were unreleased in the US.

A few games were rendered unplayable by text being too hard to read on the Game Gear's smaller screen, and in some shoot-'em-ups bullets became too hard to see. Sadly, the former issue pretty much ruled out playing any of the Master System's RPGs on the Game Gear. *Phantasy Star* was a total no go, as it had compatibility issues that stopped certain sprites from appearing. *OutRun* was another game that suffered from sprites vanishing, but that wasn't too much of a blow as the Game Gear had its own rendition of Sega's classic coin-op.

A few Sega magazines featured a boxout during their Master System reviews where they'd report how the game in question played using the convertor. In one instance, *Sega Pro* claimed that the Master System version of the *Castlevania*-alike *Master Of Darkness* played better using it.

Originally retailing at around £14.99 (half the price of most Game Gear games), it was a very inexpensive purchase and consequently now very common to find. A few different models exist – Sega released the Master Gear and Master Gear 2, but there was little to no difference between the two. It has since been reported, though, that the Master Gear 2 works perfectly on the newer Majesco Game Gear, whereas the original Master Gear refuses to.

The Beeshu Gear Master third-party convertor had the advantage of playing Codemasters' larger-shaped Game Gear cartridges without problems, while the Nuby convertor had a cartridge slot that faced horizontally rather than vertically. It was a bizarre design choice, as it didn't take much more than a little knock to dislodge a cartridge. Sega's official convertor was the clear winner in terms of design – it had a large plastic screw on the back that held the device firmly in place.

A Game Gear convertor for the Mega Drive – similar to the SNES's Super Game Boy – was reportedly in development early in the Game Gear's life. It was never officially spoken of, however, so chances are the story was little more than wishful thinking from the Nineties gaming press.

…AND THE REST



01. TV Tuner

When the analogue signals are switched off, this device won't be quite as useless as you may think – there's an AV port on the top that, via an extra cable, can be used to feed other inputs into the Game Gear. Using it as a monitor to play another console is a novelty, if nothing else. The aerial was comically long, with a tip prone to breaking. It also came with a stand to hold the Game Gear upright. With no TV tuner available for either the Game Boy or Lynx, a lot of Game Gears were sold on the back of this peripheral's existence. Until a few years ago, they were still worth quite a bit of money.

02. Master Link

This virtually unheard of piece of cabling allowed the use of Master System and Mega Drive joypads. It could also be used by a second person when playing a two-player Master System game via the Master Gear. The unnecessary screw holes on the joypad port suggest it was made using 'off the shelf' parts.

03. Car Adaptor

If this was released in this day and age of zealous health and safety warnings, it would no doubt warn not to play on your Game Gear while driving. Back in the Nineties, though, it was seemingly fine to do that. We joke, of course.

04. Cleaning Gear

Moisture from your breath could apparently cause corrosion on cartridge contacts over time. A much safer way to clean your Game Gear was by using this card, which fit neatly into the cartridge slot. The plastic casing opened up to reveal extra cleaning pads. Cotton buds and cleaning fluid worked just as well, but this did slot into the Game Gear nicely.

05. Action Replay/ Game Genie

Codemasters' Game Genie cheat device was huge, but the similar Action Replay was a whole lot smaller, making it easier to carry while out and about. The Game Genie did have a handy compartment to store the cheat code book, mind you.

06. Super Wide Gear

Designed to magnify the Game Gear's screen, the official Super Wide Gear could also be used in conjunction with the TV tuner. When buying, it's a good idea to check for scratches and marks. Unofficial models exist, but they don't fit the Game Gear as snugly as the Wide Gear.

07. Carry Case

This official hold-all really did hold it all – nine games, the handheld itself, PSU, battery pack and the Wide Gear. If you wanted to take your collection with you, this is what you needed. Good luck trying to fit third-party peripherals, though – the compartments were designed for the official products.

The Collector's Guide

TOP FIVE GAMES TO PLAY



Sonic The Hedgehog

■ This set the bar high for Game Gear conversions. Rather than simply port it, Sega adapted the game to the smaller screen and redrew Sonic, giving him the correct colour trainers, unlike the brown ones in the SMS version.



Shinobi

■ Our love for this game was shown in issue 92, but there's no way we couldn't mention it here. Levels could be tackled in any order you fancy, and the fact that some were easier to finish depending on which of the five ninjas you picked added extra replay value.



Castle Of Illusion Starring Mickey Mouse

■ Until *Sonic* showed up, this was the Game Gear's premier platformer. It wasn't redesigned for the small screen, but you'd be crazy to turn down the chance to battle a giant chocolate bar and go swimming in a huge cup of tea.



Defenders Of Oasis

■ An RPG with an Egyptian theme, although you wouldn't be able to tell that from the box art – the main character looks like he's jumped off the stage of *Riverdance*. Battles were random and turn-based, giving it a *Final Fantasy* feel. *Crystal Warriors* is also worth a look if you're an RPG fan.



The Excellent Dizzy Collection

■ We don't know why Dizzy was dressed like a pimp on the cover, but we do know that this offered more variety than *Fantastic Dizzy* due to containing three games: *Dizzy The Adventurer, Panic Dizzy* and *Go! Dizzy Go!*. Codemasters even found room on the cartridge for some speech samples.

PLAY THESE NEXT



Pengo

■ This block-pushing action game was a launch title in all three territories, and like the majority of early Game Gear games, it's an incredibly common find. It may not look as pretty as the other games on this page, but when it came to addictive qualities it's very hard to beat. The Western version had different music to the Japanese version.



Streets Of Rage 2

■ The first *Streets Of Rage* was missing a character from the Master System version, leaving just Axel and Blaze. That problem was resolved here with three characters to pick from instead of two. It was slightly easier than the Mega Drive version but no less enjoyable, with faithful renditions of the 16-bit version's much-loved musical score.



Columns

■ Well, you can't claim that this puzzler didn't make the most of the Game Gear's colour screen, creating a game that would struggle on the Game Boy. An essential part of any collection as it's a puzzler that's synonymous with the system, just like *Tetris* is with the Game Boy. A little-known sequel called *Super Columns* was also released.



Wonder Boy: The Dragon's Trap

■ It's amazing how differently the *Wonder Boy* games played from one another; they're almost connected by name alone. This is often referred to as Wonder Boy's career highlight, with large, open levels, a distinct visual style and the chance to change into different creatures with their own skills.



Legend Of Illusion Starring Mickey Mouse

■ The final part of Mickey Mouse's *Illusion* series and also a Game Gear exclusive. As soon as you started it, you wanted to play it through to the end. Not to be confused with the US-only *Mickey's Ultimate Challenge*, which was a dire experience mostly made up of mini-games.

TOP FIVE IMPORT GAMES



Ronald McDonald In The Magical World

■ A solid, colourful and instantly playable platformer developed by Treasure. It's a little strange that it never saw a release outside Japan – it's not like the licence didn't hold worldwide appeal.



Gunstar Heroes

■ The system's limitations were clear – sprites flicker badly and a level from the Mega Drive version is missing – but it was still an impressive conversion. Treasure was even able to bring over some of the special effects, like the boss made of rotating cubes.

Coca-Cola Kid

■ Not only did this use the same engine as *Sonic Chaos*, but it also recycled some of the sound effects. The version that came with the Japan-only Coca-Cola Game Gear came on a red cartridge.



The Berlin Wall

■ An early single-screen platformer with much in common with *Bubble Bobble*. Possibly denied a European release due to cultural sensitivity, although Sega could have easily changed the name – it has nothing to do with Berlin at all.



Puzzle & Action: Tant-R

■ Long before *WarioWare* there was *Tant-R*, a mini-game collection starring characters that looked suspiciously like the Bonanza Brothers. The mini-games lasted around a minute each. Great for instant gratification.



IMPORT THESE NEXT



Bust-A-Move

■ As well as the obvious benefit over the Game Boy version, which featured patterns instead of colours, the Game Gear version also had a link-lead option for two players. It was known as *Puzzle Bobble* in Japan and released as part of the Kid's Gear series – a range of simpler titles for younger gamers that came in larger boxes to the standard.



Mega Man

■ Not a conversion of the NES original but a remix of *Mega Man 4* and *Mega Man 5*. Capcom passed the porting baton over to US Gold for this one, and although it's unfairly tough in places, it was good enough to make up for the disaster that was *Strider Returns*. Worth a pretty penny, even if it's unboxed.



Shining Force: The Sword Of Hajya

■ Known as *Shining Force Gaiden 2* in Japan, this was the only Game Gear *Shining Force* to get a US release. A turn-based affair with a high number of characters on screen at once. Certain magic attacks were more powerful than in the Japanese version to make it easier for Western gamers.



Faceball 2000

■ A first-person game on the Game Gear? Believe it. Surprisingly varied, with some levels tasking you with escaping from a maze and others being more focused on combat. The main character – a floating yellow smiley face – had a rechargeable shield, beating the Master Chief to it by several years.



Sylvan Tale

■ If *Defenders Of Oasis* was the Game Gear's answer to *Final Fantasy* then this was its counterpart to *Zelda*, with a very similar visual style to *A Link To The Past* and real-time combat. We'd be lying if we said the language barrier wasn't an issue, but those familiar with the genre shouldn't struggle too much.

The Collector's Guide

TOP 5 RAREST EUROPEAN GAMES

Monster Truck Wars

■ While the US version is quite common, the European version of this top-down racer from Acclaim is seldom seen. It was programmed by Gremlin and is one of its lesser-known games. Not bad, but *Super Off Road* was better.



The Smurfs Travel The World

■ The Master System version is so rare that its existence was unknown until one collector found a copy in the Czech Republic in 2000. The Game Gear version isn't quite as scarce, nor indeed as valuable, but it's still harder to find than someone who enjoyed the recent *Smurfs* movie.



Sega Game Pack 4-In-1

■ The cartridge itself isn't rare, as it was bundled with the majority of systems. Retailers were presumably flooded with second-hand copies and consequently didn't order any new boxed versions to sell, making this one hard to find.



Galaga 2

■ *Galaga '91* took its time coming to Europe. So much so that Sega had to change the name to *Galaga 2*, as it didn't make it out until 1993. *Super Space Invaders* is a cheaper and more common alternative for those looking for something similar.



Bugs Bunny In Double Trouble

■ This platformer was released in 1996 – a whole year after the launch of the Saturn and PlayStation – and as such most people had turned their backs on the Game Gear. It was such a late release that the box art was rendered in CGI.



GET THESE NEXT



Power Drive

■ Like many of the games on this page, rally racer *Power Drive* was a late release for the system. It's very nice to look at, and the isometric perspective made it stand out from the likes of *OutRun*, *Chase HQ* and *Super Monaco GP*, which all used very similar scrolling techniques to one another.



Super Star Wars: Return Of The Jedi

■ With a choice of three characters and some slick Lightsaber animations when playing as Luke, this was a surprisingly polished romp. Although the Game Gear received games based on *A New Hope* and *Return Of The Jedi*, it never saw a game based on *The Empire Strikes Back*, which is slightly odd.



Tarzan: Lord Of The Jungle

■ The Game Boy version is easy to find, but sightings of this Game Gear edition on the collector's market are often months apart. It was one of the first games from Eurocom, which is still around today, and to be honest it really did look and play like somebody's first attempt at making a platformer.



Sonic Blast

■ Known as *G Sonic* in Japan, *Sonic Blast* had some of the best visuals the Game Gear had to offer thanks to some *Donkey Kong Country*-style computer-assisted rendering. As we all know, though, good graphics don't make a good game. The levels were woefully short and that elusive *Sonic* vibe was sorely missing.



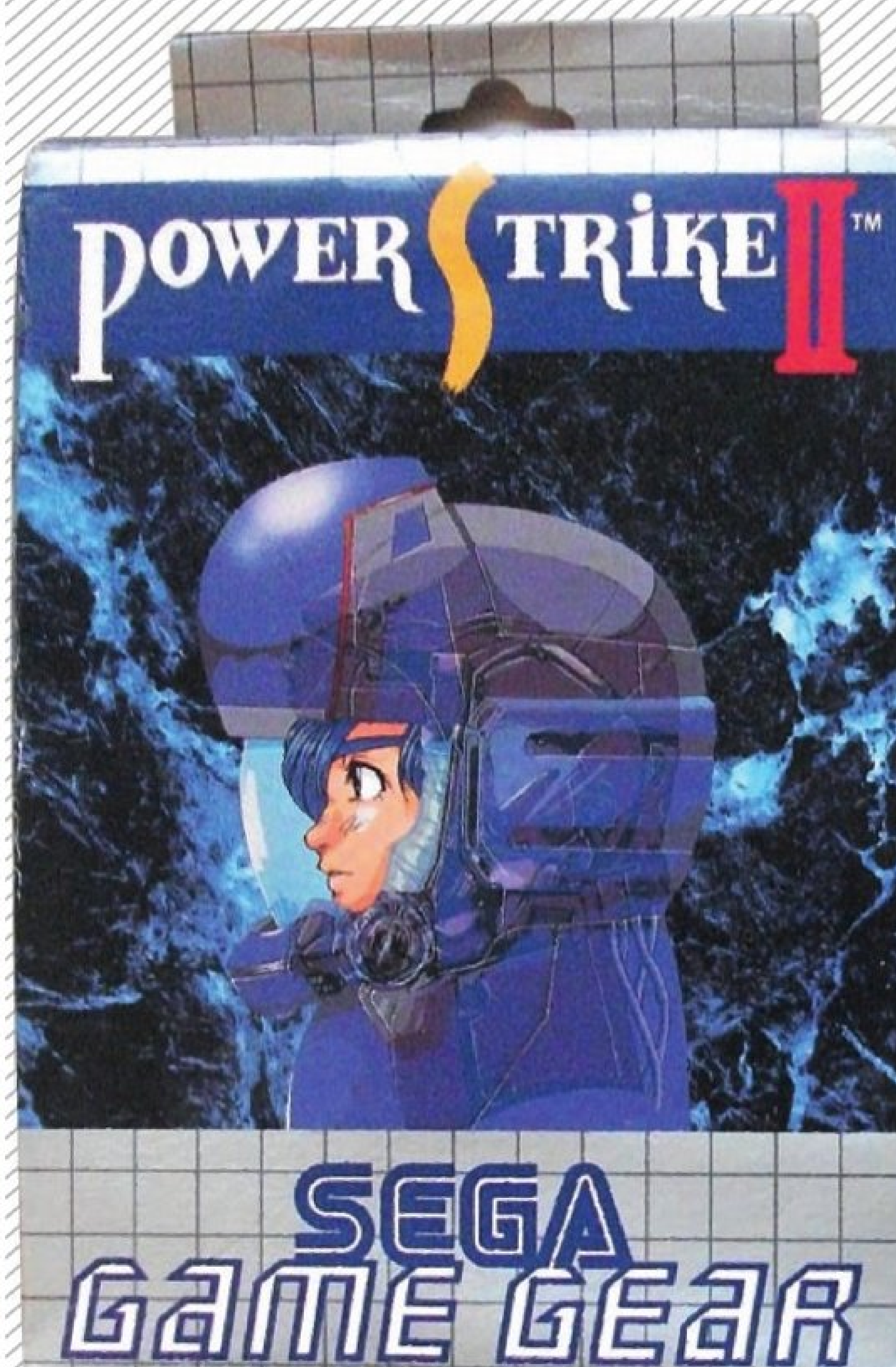
Sonic 2-In-1

■ Another *Sonic* game? Bizarrely, yes. This two-game collection didn't feature *Sonic The Hedgehog* and *Sonic 2* as you may expect but rather *Sonic 2* and *Sonic Spinball*. Games were chosen not via a menu but by power cycling the handheld. The two were far from the greatest of the 'hog's handheld adventures, making them odd choices.

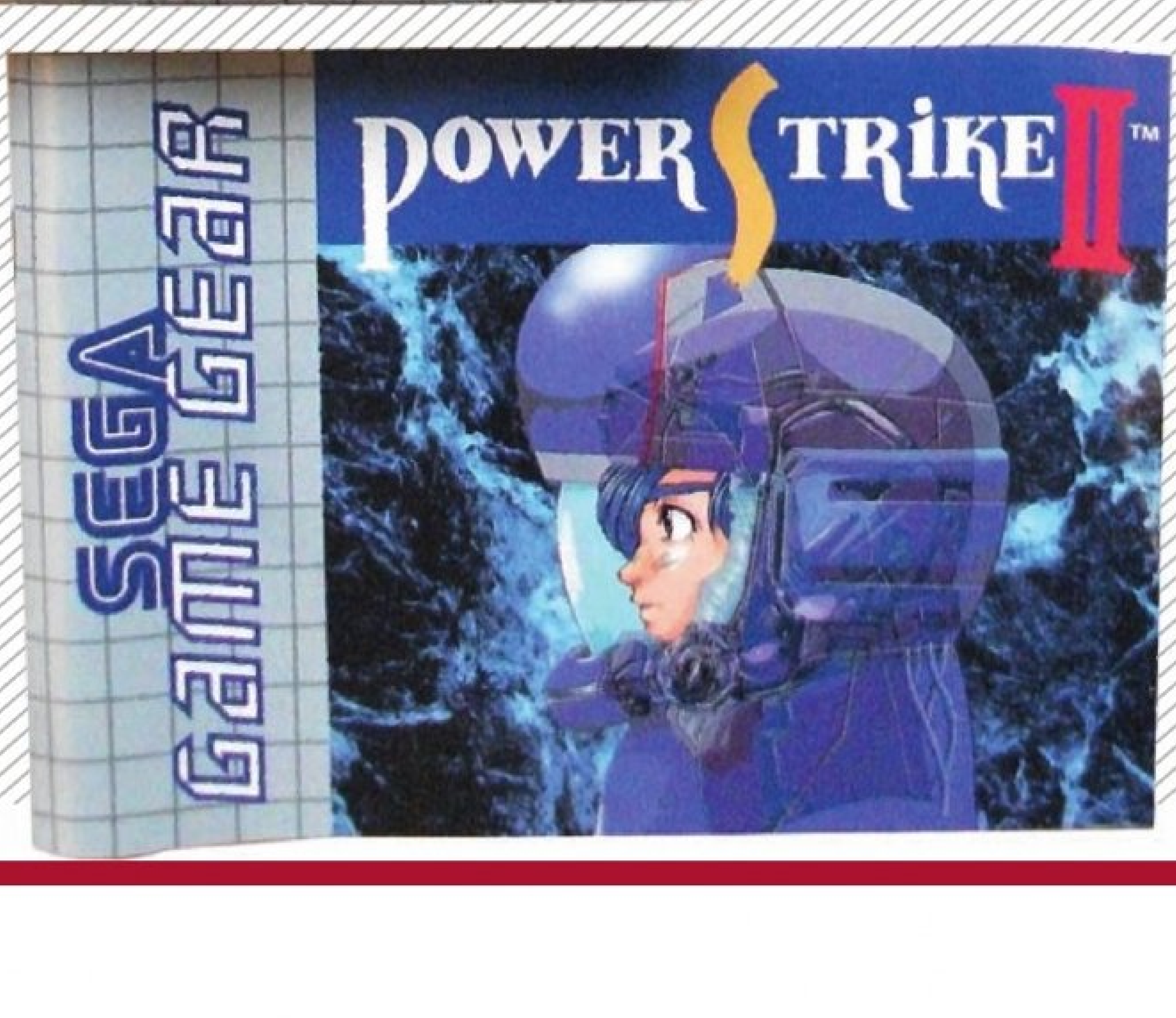


THE JEWEL IN THE CROWN

Both the Master System and Game Gear received Power Strike II, but they were entirely different games. Both were excellent, though, showing off what the respective systems could do



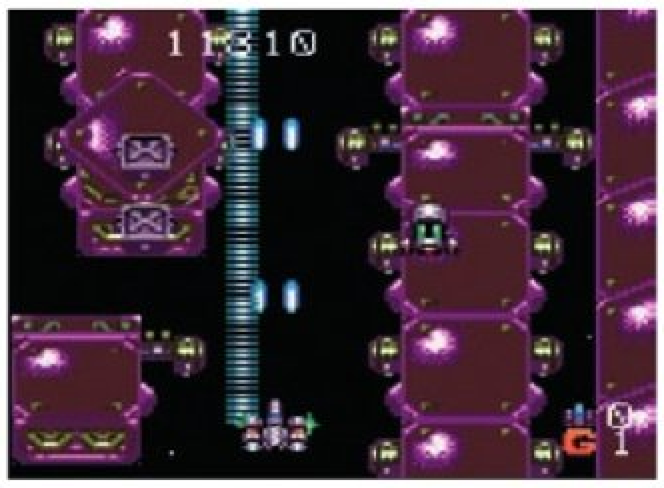






What makes it so special?

■ *GG Aleste: Galvanic Gunner Aleste* was Japan-only, but the sequel, *GG Aleste II: Lance Bird*, was granted a European release as *Power Strike II*. It put the system through its paces with busy backdrops and an alluring special effect when using a smart bomb. It's one of the hardest games to track down.



Why is it so expensive?

■ It's easily the best example of the genre for the Game Gear, and as every retro gamer worth their salt knows, fans of 2D shoot-'em-ups are quite willing to pay vast sums to satisfy their itchy trigger fingers. The fact that it was never released in the US also makes it desirable to US collectors.



What makes it hard to find?

■ By 1993 the system was starting to appeal more to the younger demographic. As such, retailers more than likely chose to stock colourful platformers and licensed games instead. It's hard to imagine a child buying *Power Strike II* over any of the heavily promoted *Sonic The Hedgehog* games.

The Collector's Guide

THE COMPLETE CHECK LIST OF PAL GAME GEAR GAMES



Arena: Maze Of Death

- Addams Family, The
- Adventures Of Batman And Robin, The
- Aerial Assault
- Aladdin
- Alien 3
- Alien Syndrome
- Arena: Maze Of Death
- Ariel: The Little Mermaid
- Asterix And The Great Rescue
- Asterix And The Secret Mission
- Ax Battler: A Legend Of Golden Axe
- Ayrton Senna's Super Monaco GP II
- Baku Baku
- Batman Forever
- Batman Returns
- Battletoads
- Beavis And Butt-Head
- Bonkers Wax Up!
- Bram Stoker's Dracula
- Bugs Bunny In Double Trouble



Chuck Rock

- Castle Of Illusion Starring Mickey Mouse
- Chakan
- Championship Hockey
- Chessmaster, The
- Chuck Rock
- Chuck Rock II: Son Of Chuck
- CJ Elephant Fugitive
- Columns
- Cool Spot
- Cosmic Spacehead
- Crash Dummies
- Crystal Warriors
- Daffy Duck In Hollywood
- Defenders Of Oasis



Donald Duck: Deep Duck Trouble

- Desert Strike
- Devilish
- Donald Duck: Deep Duck Trouble
- Donald Duck: Lucky Dime Caper
- Double Dragon
- Dr Robotnik's Mean Bean Machine
- Dragon Crystal
- Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story
- Dropzone
- Dynamite Headdy
- Earthworm Jim
- Ecco The Dolphin
- Ecco: The Tides Of Time
- Ernie Els Golf
- Evander Holyfield's Real Deal Boxing
- Excellent Dizzy Collection
- F1: World Championship Edition
- F1 Racing
- F-15 Strike Eagle
- Factory Panic
- Fantastic Dizzy
- Fantasy Zone
- Fatal Fury Special
- FIFA International Soccer
- FIFA Soccer '96
- Galaga 2
- Game Pack 4-In-1
- Garfield: Caught In The Act
- George Foreman KO Boxing
- Global Gladiators
- G-Loc Air Battle
- GP Rider
- Halley Wars
- Home Alone
- Hook



The Incredible Hulk

- Hurricanes
- Incredible Hulk, The
- Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade
- James Bond 007: The Duel
- James Pond 2: RoboCod
- James Pond 3: Operation Starfi5h
- Joe Montana Football
- Judge Dredd
- Jungle Book, The
- Jurassic Park
- Kawasaki Superbikes
- Klax
- Land Of Illusion Starring Mickey Mouse
- Legend Of Illusion Starring Mickey Mouse
- Lemmings
- Lion King, The
- Madden '96
- Man Overboard
- Marble Madness



Joe Montana Football

- Marko's Magic Football
- Micro Machines
- Micro Machines 2: Turbo Tournament
- Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers
- Monster Truck Wars
- Mortal Kombat
- Mortal Kombat II
- Mortal Kombat 3
- NBA Jam
- NBA Jam: Tournament Edition
- NFL Quarterback Club
- NHL Hockey
- Ninja Gaiden
- Olympic Gold
- Ottifants, The
- OutRun
- OutRun Europa
- Paperboy
- Pengo
- Pete Sampras Tennis
- PGA Tour Golf
- PGA Tour Golf 2
- PGA Tour Golf '96
- Phantom 2040
- Popils
- Power Drive
- Power Rangers: The Movie
- Power Strike II
- Predator 2

EXTREMELY RARE Games that have less than a few dozen known copies available.

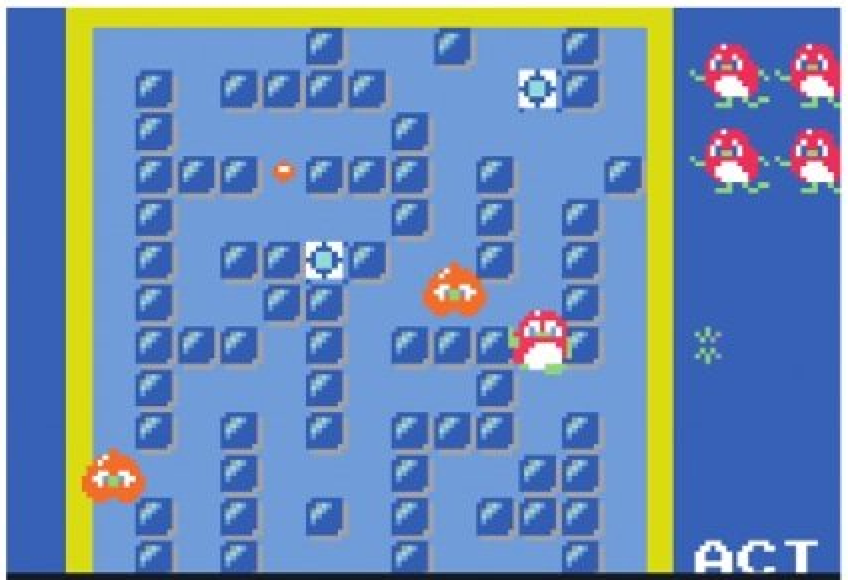
VERY RARE Very hard to come by. Expect to see only a couple of copies per year.

RARE You should be able to source these in a reasonable amount of time.

UNCOMMON You won't find them straight away, but you will after a search.

COMMON Always just a click away for the average collector.

VERY COMMON So common you'll find them in most bundles of games you buy.



Pengo



Wizard Pinball

- Primal Rage
- Prince Of Persia
- Psychic World
- Putt & Putter
- Ren & Stimpy: Quest For The Shaven Yak
- Rise Of The Robots
- Ristar
- Road Rash
- Road Runner: Desert Speedtrap
- RoboCop 3
- RoboCop Versus The Terminator
- Schtrompfs, Les
- Schtrompfs Autour De Monde, Les
- Sensible Soccer
- Shinobi
- Shinobi 2
- Simpsons: Bart vs The Space Mutants, The
- Simpsons: Bart vs The World, The
- Simpsons: Krusty's Funhouse, The
- Simpsons: The Itchy & Scratchy Game, The
- Slider
- Solitaire Poker
- Sonic 2-In-1
- Sonic Blast
- Sonic Chaos
- Sonic Drift
- Sonic Labyrinth
- Sonic Spinball
- Sonic The Hedgehog
- Sonic The Hedgehog 2
- Sonic Triple Trouble
- Space Harrier
- Speedy Gonzales: Cheese Catastrophe



Tempo Jr

- Spider-Man
- Spider-Man: Return Of The Sinister Six
- Stargate
- Star Wars
- Super Star Wars: Return Of The Jedi
- Streets Of Rage
- Streets Of Rage 2
- Strider Returns
- Striker
- Super Columns
- Super Kick Off
- Super Monaco GP
- Super Off Road Racer
- Super Smash TV
- Super Space Invaders
- Superman
- Tails Adventure
- Talespin
- Tarzan: Lord Of The Jungle
- Taz In Escape From Mars
- Tazmania
- Tempo Jr
- Terminator 2: The Arcade Game
- Terminator 2: Judgment Day
- Terminator, The
- Tintin Au Tibet
- Tom And Jerry: The Movie
- True Lies
- Ultimate Soccer
- Vampire: Master Of Darkness
- Virtua Fighter Animation
- VR Troopers
- Wimbledon
- Winter Olympics
- Wizard Pinball
- Wolfchild
- Wonderboy
- Wonderboy: The Dragon's Trap
- Woody Pop
- World Class Leaderboard Golf
- World Cup USA '94
- World Cup Soccer
- WWF Raw
- WWF WrestleMania Steel Cage Challenge
- X-Men: GamesMaster's Legacy
- Zool

Collector Q&A

Omar Cornut is the founder of SMS Power, a website dedicated to preserving Sega's 8-bit systems

When did you start SMS Power and why?
I started the site as a means to both physically and digitally preserve Sega 8-bit gaming. I'm hoping that eventually my collection can find a home in a public library and be archived for preservation and research.

When did you start collecting seriously?
I started in 1997. It was a bit of an accident really, starting with games I wanted to play, and then through my other projects I ended up receiving many free carts. I became addicted to it, like some sort of fate I can't escape from.

How many games are in your GG collection?
I'm not sure of the exact count, but it seems to be over 700. I've got a good share of Japanese, European and USA releases, as well as a smaller collection of Brazilian, Korean and Taiwanese cartridges. The latter are particularly tough to obtain. Even travelling to Korea and hunting obscure retro shops, I had difficulty finding Game Gear games. Some of the Korean games have gold cartridges, which are certainly worth the trip.

What's the most you've spent on a GG game?
Indecent three-digit numbers for some prototypes. Normal releases don't fetch such high prices really.

What is the showpiece of your collection?
Uncovering non-retail items is the most exciting thing. I have about 25 prototype carts, including a handful of unreleased games, an original development Game Gear with TV output, and a development kit comprising a bunch of old scary computer cards and boxes. The Japanese console variations are also super cool: white, yellow, red, blue – you name it. The colours of their packaging are very pleasing. It's like a party on the shelves. Love them.

Is there one particular game that is eluding you?
I am rather stingy when it comes to buying games and thus my European and USA collections still have huge gaps. Games like *Tarzan* and *Power Drive* fetch high prices, so I'm waiting for a cheap opportunity. If people stopped buying them it would make my life easier!

What's the hardest game to find that you own?
I've got a Japanese game called *Car License*, published by Mitsubishi, which never made its way into the shops as far as I know. It's designed to help learner drivers.

Any advice to new Game Gear collectors?
Don't do it! Go in the forest and build yourself a house!



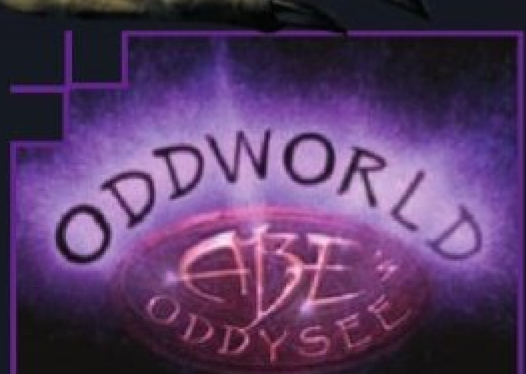

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THE MAKING OF





With Stranger's Wrath set for an HD release, Mudoken slave expert and series creator Lorne Lanning talks to David Crookes about the first game's deep and dark origins



IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** GT INTERACTIVE
- » **DEVELOPER:** ODDWORLD INHABITANTS
- » **RELEASED:** 1997
- » **PLATFORM:** PLAYSTATION, PC, GAME BOY
- » **GENRE:** PLATFORM

RG: You made *Oddworld* at a time when 3D was becoming the norm. Why did you stick with 2D?
LL: At the time, 3D on the PlayStation was very crude. We couldn't get the degree of animation smoothness and rich environments that we were after, had we developed a 3D game back then. So we decided to build all of our assets in 3D and then pre-render all of the bitmaps for the game. The game was 2.5D, but its image depth and detail gave it a richer look than what we could have achieved in real-time 3D at that time.

RG: Did other videogames inspire *Oddworld*?
LL: They did. I was inspired by games that drew us in with their stories and realistic characters – games like *Out Of This World* [*Another World*], *Prince Of Persia* and *Flashback* made us feel like we were playing living characters as opposed to moving pieces of digital art around the screen. Then the fully visualised world of *Myst* showed us that film-like production quality could be a draw in itself. So we wanted to bring those lifelike characters with relevant stories into fully realised worlds that, if executed well, could sustain some degree of disbelief and wonder.

RG: What sort of overall vision was there for the game?
LL: It was to birth an 'empathy over aggression' lead character who lived in a world that would mirror the dilemmas of our own world. He would have to use his brains because he lacked the brawn, and be someone who would appeal to young and old and male and female alike. It was also an experience that we wanted people to become engrossed in, not just for the challenge but for the story – yet the story had to be more than just an excuse for gameplay, which is how I felt about many stories in games at that point in time.

RG: *Oddworld*'s humour was an important aspect of the game. What was behind the decision to allow the lead character to speak, snarl and fart, for instance?
LL: Considering that the nature of our stories would be quite dark, it seemed necessary to offset the dark themes with lighthearted humour that would continually remind the audience to not take us too seriously and have fun. If you get the deeper meanings, great! If not, so what? You should still have a great time playing. *The Simpsons* does this incredibly well. So does *The Daily Show* here in America. It's a spoof news show on Comedy Central, but it is largely recognised as the only TV news outlet that is actually reporting on what is really happening and calling out the lies of those in power (which our corporate media have increasingly refused to do). The point is: you can talk about a lot of issues and the public is willing to ride along, so long as you don't get up

on a soap box and forget that you're making entertainment.

RG: How did you go about making the game?

LL: The story was created first. Then the characters were designed by Steve Olds. We chopped and changed the way we wanted them to look many times. They had to be right and display the feelings that the game was trying to put across. The first thing we did, however, was produce the cinematic opening. It had to have a major impact on the player because we wanted to show this off to gamers as early as possible. That effectively was our demo that would make players stand back in awe. But we also knew that we couldn't stop there, and that we had to get the gameplay established early in the development, because only then would be be able to satisfy the investors and gain the right level of interest to see the project through to fruition.

RG: Who came up with the plot?

LL: I did, although I would bounce a lot of ideas off of the crew and Paul O'Conner [the game's designer] to see what resonated or see what we could practically change in times of production crisis. From the start, I wrote the game as if it was a film. The story was produced before the design document. I figured that if I could get it right as a story and if that story would work well as a movie then it wouldn't be a major step forward to produce strong game story as well, and I believed it worked out well.

RG: The game's audio has been described as prodigious…

LL: We were creating audio from the very beginning because we needed to demo the game to continue to get a publishing deal and continue to keep investors excited. Gamespeak was a critical component of gameplay, and so were many hints and sound effects. So audio was an integral part of development from the very beginning. We were looking for a tactile-sounding world that was more like an epic film soundtrack rather than a videogame. I always consider audio to be 50 per cent of the image.

> An experience we wanted people to become engrossed in, not just for the challenge but for the story

RG: The game was criticised for its save system, and that this led to a great deal of trial and error. Was that a mistake, in hindsight?

LL: We were trying to fix it up until the very end, but we just didn't have the time and the save code was pretty lame. We did fix it perfectly for *Abe's Exoddus,* which released one year later, so we tried to make up for it.

RG: Why did you decide on a flick-screen system rather than a scroller?

LL: Scrollers felt too gamey and bouncy for Abe. They felt more like cartoons or *Mario* and not as serious as we wanted Abe to come across. Flipping screens made the world feel more stable and focused more attention on the lead character. This gave it a very different feel from scrollers, and made it seem more like locked off shots from a film.

RG: How did you come up with the game's puzzles?

LL: We pulled teeth trying to create more and more of them with the limited programming resources we had. It was basically a creative process, and we wanted all of the puzzles and enemies to be relative to the story and condition of the world. We also wanted to twist the idea of rescuing as a priority over killing so the idea that you had to lead characters through hazards to save them was to create a tension that made you feel more responsible for those you were supposed to save. This was not a common play pattern, and so we wanted to explore the feeling of tension when you're taking responsibility for others in a dangerous and hostile environment. We also wanted your mishaps to be funny, albeit a bit sick and twisted.

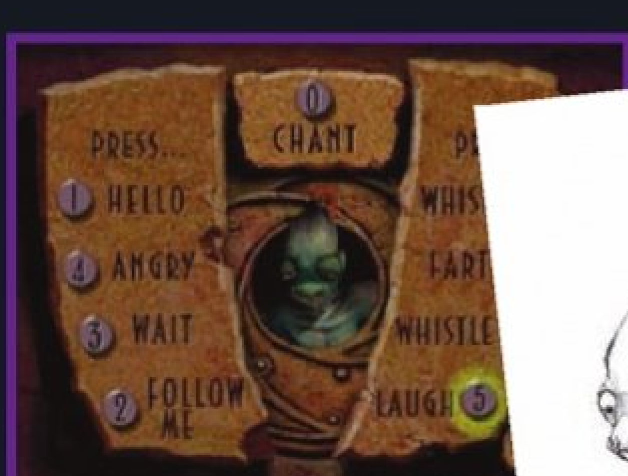
RG: Did you always envisage *Oddworld* becoming a series?

LL: I always saw Abe as a five-part story, which we called *The Oddworld Quintology.*

CHANT AND KILL

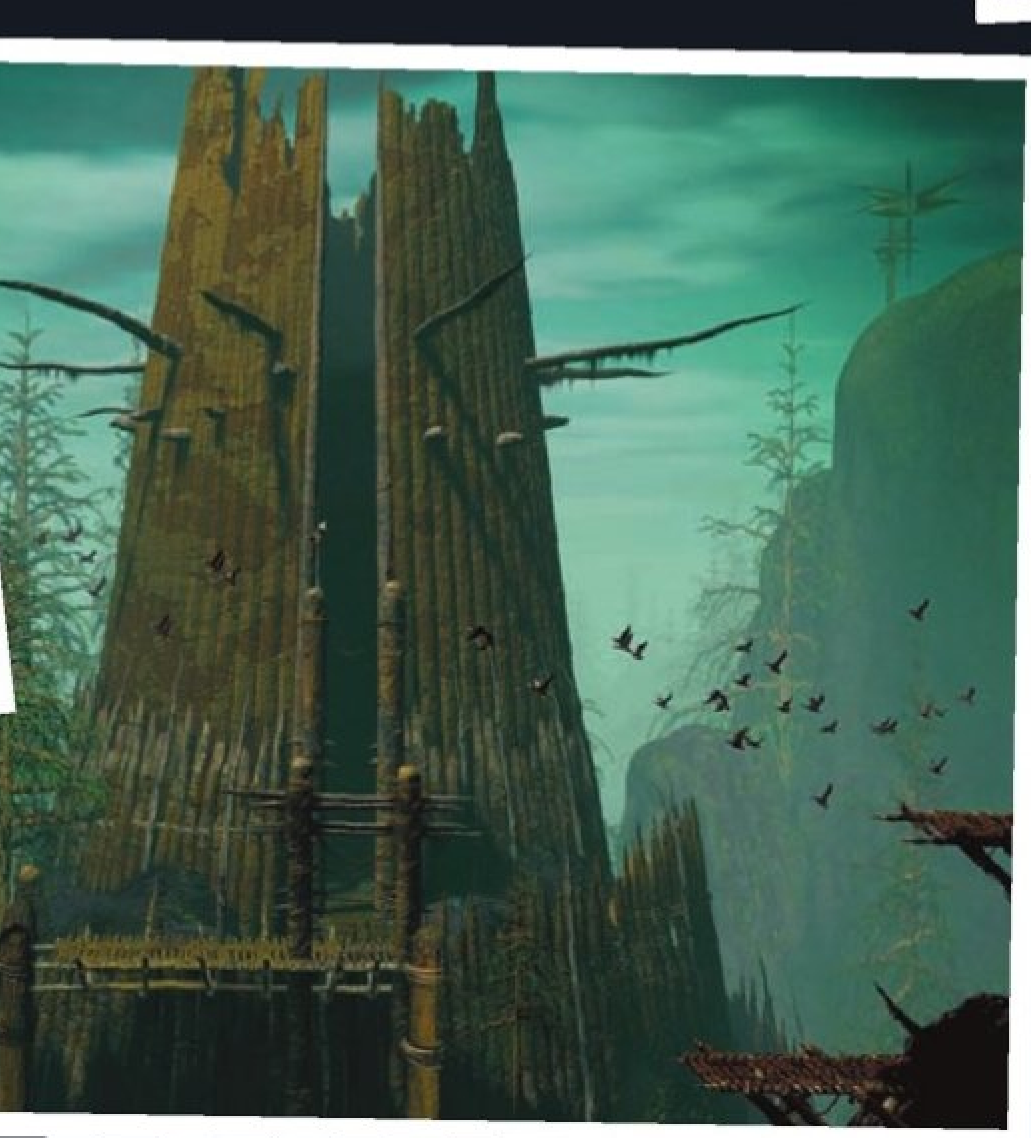
KILLING THE ENEMY in *Oddworld* was not just a simple case of shoot and move on. Abe could chant and take over the evil Sligs, then watch them explode. "The problem was that we refused to allow Abe carry a gun," says Lorne. "We did not want to see him represented this way. So we had to conceive of a way that the gamer could have some great shootouts and dynamic battle action without actually having Abe be the vehicle for destruction. Our solution needed to be something that was core to his indigenous origins and the mystical ways of his ancestors. Ultimately, we figured out the possession play mechanic. If he possessed a character, he would be able to use their abilities while never sacrificing the image of his more peaceful persona. Once you de-possessed, you made the choice not to have the possessed abilities any longer. It was a tough problem to crack, but the solution worked."





» [PSone] Abe could speak, lending a whole new dimension to the gameplay.







» [PC] Traps were rampant in *Abe's Odyssee,* but could be used to your advantage.



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

ODDWORLD: ABE'S EXODDUS
SYSTEMS: PLAYSTATION
YEAR: 1998

ODDWORLD: MUNCH'S ODDYSEE
SYSTEM: XBOX
YEAR: 2001

ODDWORLD: STRANGER'S WRATH (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: XBOX
YEAR: 2005



THE HISTORY OF

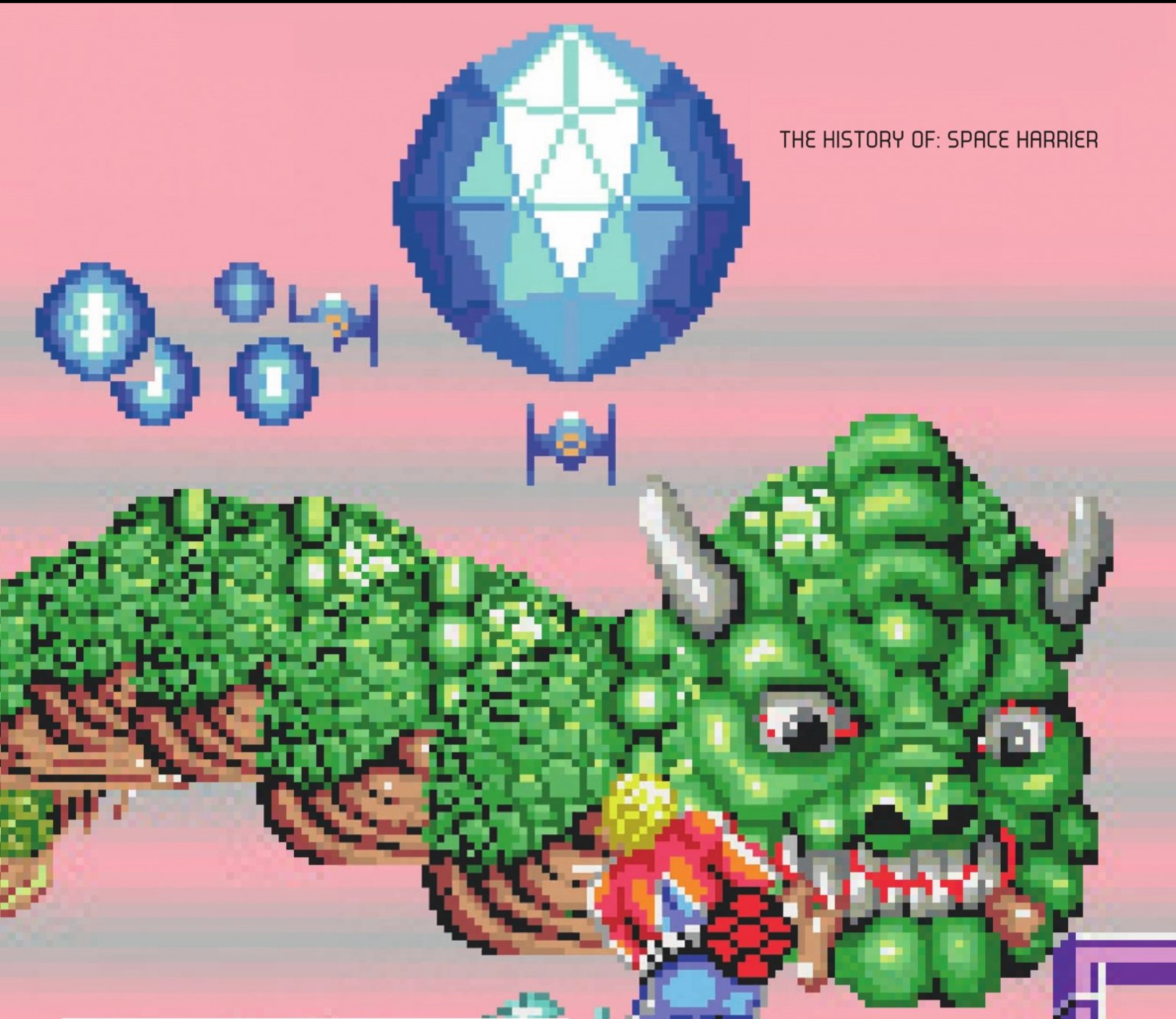
SPACE HARRIER

When Sega unleashed Space Harrier in 1985, it delivered a unique gaming experience that was as exciting to play as it was exhilarating to watch. Darran Jones heads back to the fantasy zone for one last blast

It's easy to forget just how big a deal *Space Harrier* was when it was first released in arcades at the end of 1985. While the shoot-'em-up genre was doing very well thanks to the likes of *R-Type* and *Gradius*, gamers were left wanting more exciting variations.

Developer Yu Suzuki answered this call with *Space Harrier*, an absolutely mesmerising shooter that not only helped spawn a brand new sub-genre – the on-rails shooter – but also improved on the excellent sprite technology that Suzuki had first introduced in *Hang-On*.

The technology in question was called Super Scaler, and *Space Harrier* was the second of many Sega games to utilise it. *Space Harrier* was already



an impressive-looking game thanks to the System 16 board that powered it, but the Super Scaler tech allowed Suzuki to create some impressive and imaginative visuals that still impress today. In an interview at GDC 2011, Yu Suzuki revealed that he wasn't pleased with the speed of polygons at the time of *Space Harrier*'s release and was looking for a way to make his game as frantic and fast as possible. Super Scaler technology allowed him to do just that.

Space Harrier put the player in the shoes of the titular character, a hardened Arnie clone who boasted the ability to fly and could also handle a huge laser cannon under his arm as easily as a child holds a pencil. Set in the Fantasy Zone, the same world that had appeared in Sega's earlier arcade shoot-'em-up *Fantasy Zone*, the core gameplay consisted of your Harrier thundering along and blasting away any enemy that gets in his way.

The most interesting aspect of *Space Harrier*, though, is that it started off as a completely different game under the lead of another developer. Suzuki ended up taking over the **project when the team wasn't getting anywhere with the game's** 100-page design document.

"Originally, the game was set in a realistic setting with a jet that shot missiles into the foreground," revealed Suzuki in 1UP.com's 'The Disappearance Of Yu Suzuki' interview in 2010. "With a jet airplane, a game requires a lot of pattern change data to move back and forth across the screen, so I

had to simplify the airplane to the character we ultimately used." Suzuki also mentioned in his GDC interview that the size of the plane would sometimes obscure enemy flight patterns, meaning they needed something smaller for the main character. Thankfully, he managed to find a solution in time for the *Top Gun*-inspired *After Burner*, which appeared in 1987.

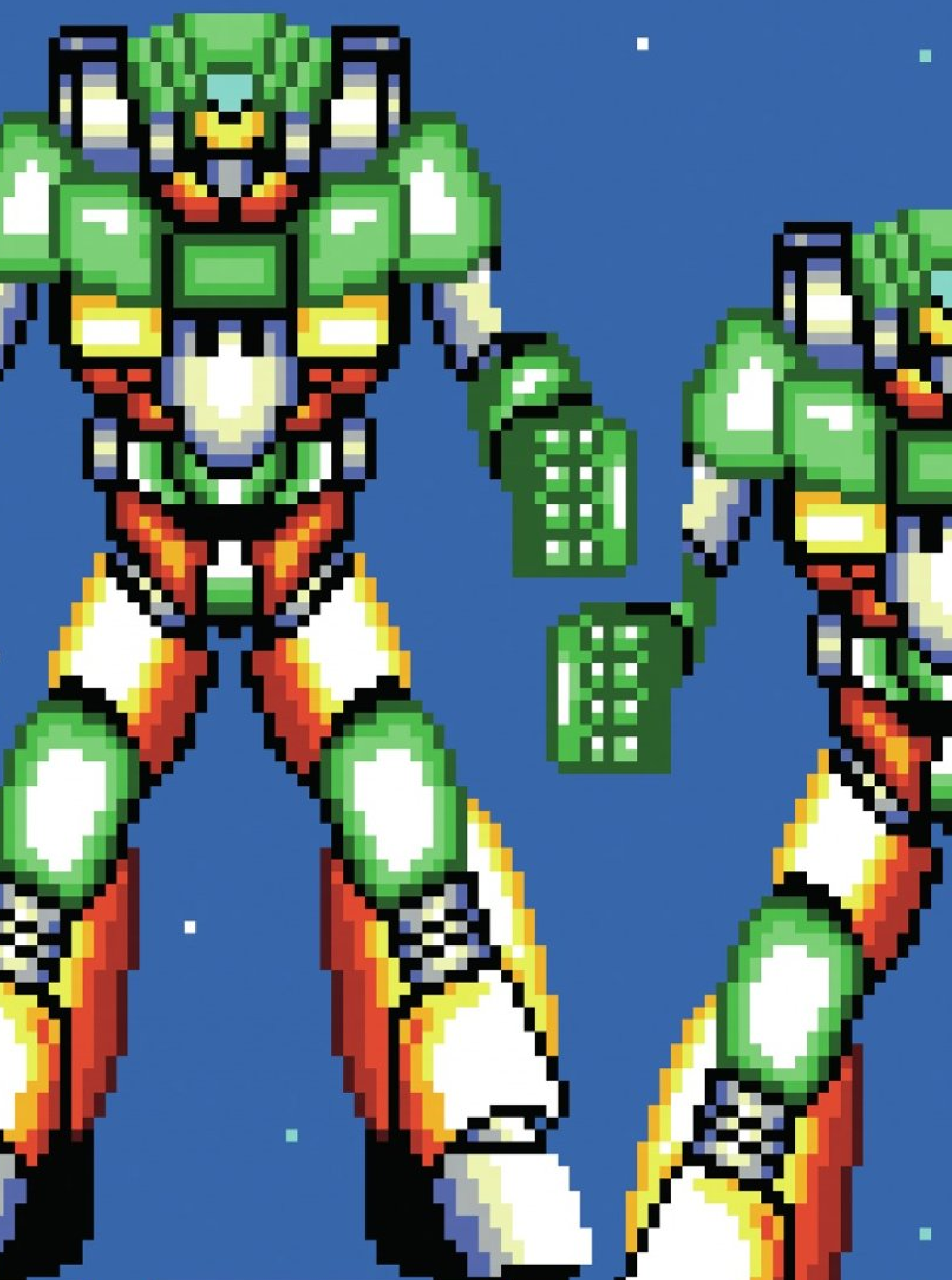
Suzuki also revealed that arcade testing was another reason why the jet was replaced with a far hipper flying space man. When *Space Harrier* was first tested in arcades, it did poorly, and Suzuki found himself back at the drawing board. Eventually, *Space Harrier*'s inspiration came from two very unusual sources: the film adaptation of *The NeverEnding Story*, and a Japanese manga called *Cobra*, which featured a character whose arm could turn into a gun.

Suzuki started anew, and, inspired by the fantasy art of Roger Dean, began creating the fantastical world that would eventually become the Fantasy Zone. It's also worth noting that the technology of the time was another reason for *Space Harrier*'s distinctively surreal look. "The hardware memory was very limited, so something like a huge mushroom was very appropriate because it didn't use up too much memory," continued Suzuki in his GDC interview. "From that perspective, we simply began utilising less memory-intensive items and the game began like that."

Despite numerous good ideas, getting *Space Harrier* off the ground wasn't an easy process, mainly because Sega was adamant that a 3D game simply wouldn't sell, as no 3D shooter had ever succeeded before. Suzuki was adamant, however, and decided to get to the core of the research to find out how he could improve his project's chances. "I asked [market research] why the other games didn't succeed and they told me it was because the target is too small," he explained in his interview with 1UP. "Based on that, my conclusion was that I basically had to make sure the player could hit the target. So, I made a homing system that guaranteed that the target could be hit. When the target was close, it would always hit, but when the target was in the distance, the player would miss. So the result of whether the player would hit the target or not was determined the second the player took the shot."

It could be said that *Space Harrier* is a ridiculously simple shooter, but there's enough challenge to ensure that it never gets boring. This, in part, is due to clever attack waves, numerous large objects that cannot be shot and so must be avoided, and the imaginative bosses that await you at the end of 16 of *Space Harrier*'s levels. It's a pure adrenaline rush that never lets up for a second, and requires a steady eye and fantastic reactions to master it. Then, of course, there was the fact that *Space Harrier* looked simply incredible, thanks to some outlandish aliens and the sheer pace at which it actually moved.

Suzuki revealed in his GDC interview that he was a massive fan of Roger Dean's distinctive artwork, especially his album covers for the English progressive rock band Yes, and it's easy to see that influence in *Space Harrier*. In addition to the work of Roger Dean, the memorable enemies and







"Space Harrier was an experience that would be virtually impossible in the home"

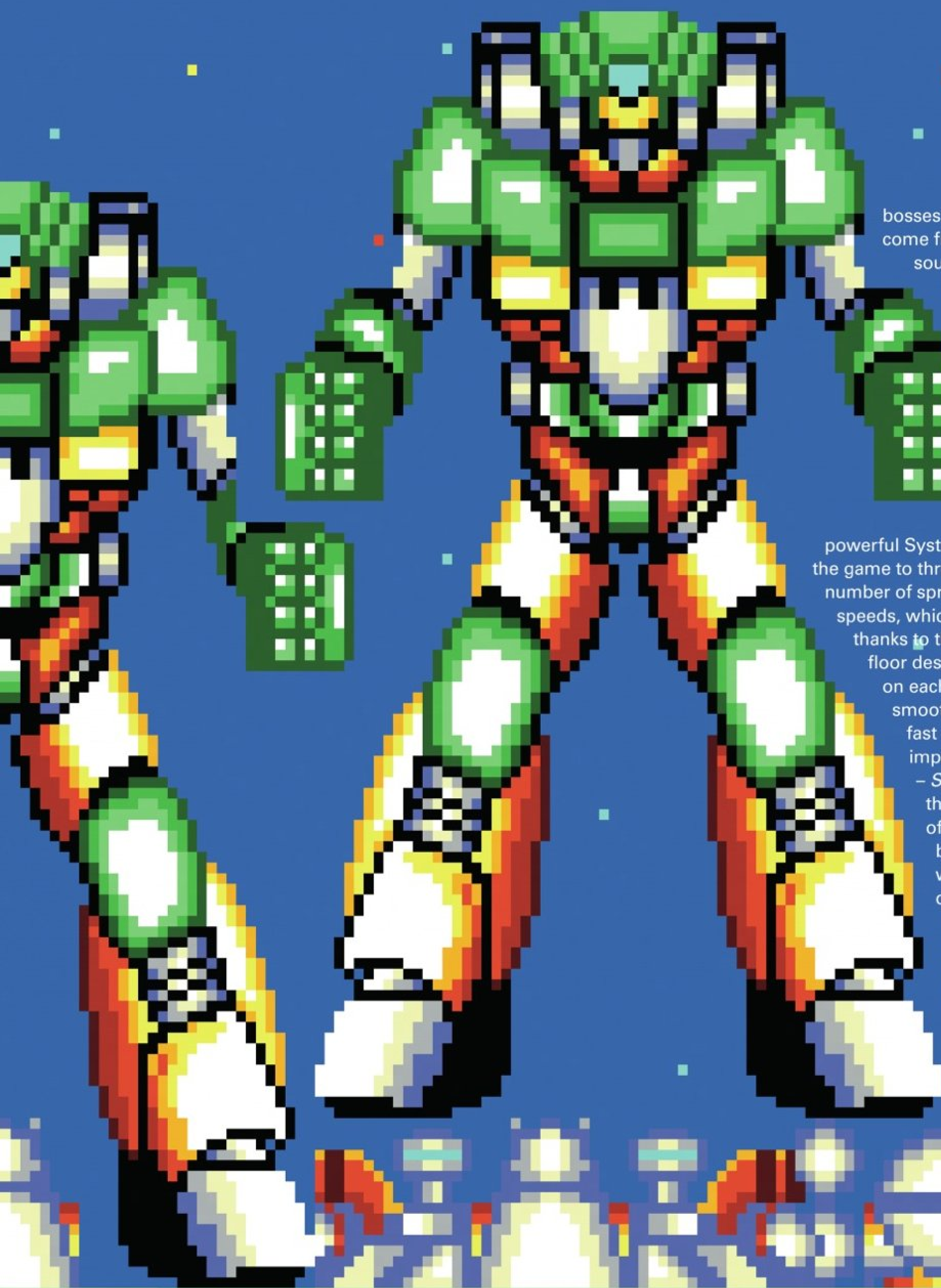


» [Arcade] As well as a Dreamcast port, *Planet Harriers* was rumoured to be getting a release on Nintendo's GameCube.



» [Arcade] *Space Harrier's* bonus stage is a direct referance to *The NeverEnding Story*, a film Yu Suzuki had enjoyed at the time.





bosses of *Space Harrier* come from a variety of other sources, most notably Chinese dragons, which feature as bosses in several of the game's levels.

Beyond looking gorgeous, *Space Harrier* was also fast. The powerful System 16 board enabled the game to throw around a large number of sprites at insane speeds, which looked even faster thanks to the chequerboard floor design that was found on each stage. Extremely smooth and blindingly fast – later levels can look impossible to onlookers – *Space Harrier* was the arcade equivalent of a Hollywood blockbuster. There wasn't a lot going on beneath its surface, but it was an unforgettable experience, especially if you were lucky enough to play the version fitted in a huge hydraulic chair.

As your Harrier zoomed around the screen – bullets would home in on your last position, forcing you to constantly stay on the move – the hydraulic chair would shift around with him, delivering an exciting experience that definitely ensured that you got your money's worth from each play. This, along with its true analogue flight controller, made *Space Harrier* an arcade experience that would be virtually impossible to re-create in the home.

That didn't stop developers from trying, though, with numerous efforts appearing on everything from the Commodore 64 to Nintendo's NES. Many of the ports varied in quality, as home systems struggled to emulate *Space Harrier*'s Super Scaling hardware. Speed was often the main killer for most versions, with the home 8-bit computers and consoles failing to capture the same sensation of movement that made the arcade game so exciting to play. Although decent ports – most notably the Amiga version – do exist, it wouldn't be until the 32X that *Space Harrier* would receive an arcade-perfect port.

Interestingly, while *Space Harrier* was a big success, it was 15 years before it received an arcade follow-up. Instead, it would be Sega's home consoles that continued the Harrier's adventures in the Fantasy Zone.

The first *Space Harrier* sequel turned up on the most surprising console of all: Sega's Master System. This was something of a strange choice, because while the Master System version of *Space Harrier* hadn't been a complete travesty of a port – it, along with the Game Gear variants, was perfectly acceptable considering the hardware – it didn't really come across as the best system to show off the technology that had made the original such a joy to play in the arcades.

The big draw of Sega's Master System sequel was that it was one of several games on the console to be in 3D, something that Sega was pushing quite aggressively at the time of *Space Harrier 3D*'s release. Many believe *Space Harrier 3D* to be a simple port of the original arcade game with gimmicky 3D, but this is far from the case, as it's a completely different game to its arcade predecessor.

It features new enemies and bosses, more indestructible objects to navigate past, and also introduces dangerous new elements such as phallic towers that grow in size at the very last moment, giving you very little time or space to manoeuvre

Flights of Fantasy

THIS WOULDN'T BE a complete guide to *Space Harrier* if we didn't mention these two oddities. *Typing Space Harrier* was released in 2002 and was extremely similar in concept to Sega's famously bizarre *The Typing Of The Dead*, which had been released three years earlier.

Only available in Japan and confined to Windows PCs, it plays almost identically to *The Typing Of The Dead*. Waves of enemies and bosses appear along with sentences, and you must destroy them as quickly as possible by typing out the words as simply as possible in romaji. It starts off easily enough providing you understand Japanese, but bigger enemies require you to type in even bigger words and sentences to defeat them.

Equally interesting, and far more playable, is *Space Fantasy Zone*, which was originally going to be released for the PC Engine Super CD-ROM². Created by NEC Avenue, it successfully marries the ultra-cute visuals of *Fantasy Zone* to *Space Harrier*'s tried-and-tested gameplay mechanics, and has *Fantasy Zone*'s Opa-Opa taking down waves and waves of enemies, taken from both *Fantasy Zone* and *Space Harrier*.

As with *Planet Harriers*, downed enemies drop coins, which can be spent in a weapon shop called Weaponalds, and there's a large selection of different power-ups to choose from, including shield boosts, huge weights and even the ability to stop time for escaping sticky situations.

The scrolling isn't particularly smooth and the lack of different-sized sprites makes it harder to judge distances between enemies, but the gorgeous visuals and excellent remixed tunes – again, borrowed from both *Space Harrier* and *Fantasy Zone* – ensure that *Space Fantasy Zone* is definitely worth experiencing. It's just a shame that it never received an official release.

out of their way. While it starts off with the same iconic tune that graced *Space Harrier*, it includes a number of additional compositions. They're not as catchy as the theme from the original, but they do suit the hectic on-screen action.

There's an altogether darker tone to *Space Harrier 3D*, with it largely ignoring the bright pastel hues of the original game in favour of far darker, more ominous colours. This sombreness is most likely down to the new plot that has the titular Harrier trying to rescue Uriah, the dragon you occasionally rode in *Space Harrier*'s bonus stages.

Space Harrier 3D was designed to highlight the Master System's 3D Glasses, and for the most part it succeeds admirably. The effect was handled very well, and like many games that used the device, *Space Harrier 3D* featured a nice level of depth, useful for avoiding incoming objects. Less useful, however, was the jerky scrolling, an unfortunate side effect of the 3D – and the high difficulty of the game. It remains an enjoyable addition to the series, though, even if it did deliver little over the original game.



» [iOS] *Space Harrier*'s most recent outing was a port of *Space Harrier II* on iOS.

Space Harrier's second sequel came less than a year after *Space Harrier 3D* in the shape of *Space Harrier II*. Quite a big stir was created at the time of its release because it was to be a launch title for Sega's Mega Drive. Released alongside *Super Thunder Blade* when the Mega Drive made its Japanese debut in October 1988, it was Sega's way of telling people that the only way to get an arcade-like experience was to buy its new machine.

Space Harrier II, like *Space Harrier 3D* before it, played things safe and stuck very closely to the format that had worked so well for *Space Harrier*. Although it was now possible to choose which of *Space Harrier II*'s 12 levels you started on, all 12 had to be completed before you could battle a final gauntlet of bosses.

While the Mega Drive couldn't compete with Super Scaler hardware, *Space Harrier II* was nonetheless an impressive release, featuring well-detailed sprites and a fast pace that was a world away from the slower Master System games. The enemies and sprites were far more imaginative than those found in *Space Harrier 3D*, although they still lacked the bizarre factor of *Space Harrier*'s weird and wonderful creations, and it proved beyond question that Sega's console was an arcade fan's dream. Ultimately, however, it was business as usual, and it would be another 11 years before a new game was added to the *Space Harrier* canon.

That game took the shape of *Planet Harriers*, a two-player arcade game that Sega released in 2000. It was a massive shot in the arm for the franchise, delivering plenty of new gameplay mechanics. By far the best addition was the excellent lock-on system, which greatly changed the way *Planet Harriers* played compared to past games in the series as an alternative to a more traditional rapid-fire gun. The new weapon was represented by a lock-on fuel bar, which enabled you to lock on to a set number of enemies before being depleted. It delivered a pleasing level of strategy to proceedings, as you could now pick and choose the best waves to lock on to. There

Super Scalers

There were lots of Sega games that featured impressive sprite-scaling technology. Here are a few of our favourites



Hang-On

Year Released: 1985

Hang-On was the first of Sega's games to utilise Super Scaler technology. As famous for its huge sit-on motorbike cabinet as it was for the gut-churningly fast roads you raced on, it's a typical Sega game, with a firm focus on arcade thrills and spills. It's long been superseded by its 1987 sequel, *Super Hang-On*, but the original remains an important racer and a fitting beginning for Sega's Super Scaler technology.



Enduro Racer

Year Released: 1986

Unlike *Hang-On*, *Enduro Racer* has you racing around on a dirt bike and boasts far more dangerous courses than the smooth tarmac of Yu Suzuki's earlier game. In addition to dodging other riders, you also had to keep an eye out for trees, rocks and logs that would litter the course. You could additionally pull back on the handlebars when approaching logs to send your bike soaring satisfyingly into the air.



OutRun

Year Released: 1986

For many, *OutRun*, along with *Shenmue*, represents Yu Suzuki's finest moment. Inspired by *The Cannonball Run* and Suzuki's own journeys around Europe, *OutRun* features gorgeous visuals and some fantastic music. Not so much a racing game but more a driving experience – time, not other cars, is your enemy – *OutRun* is a fantastic game that helped cement Yu Suzuki's reputation as the king of the arcades.



After Burner

Year Released: 1987

After failing to get a jet to work in *Space Harrier*, Yu Suzuki bounced back with the excellent *After Burner*. Shamelessly based on *Top Gun*, it's another gut-wrenching thrill ride, which, like *Space Harrier* before it, came in an awesome hydraulic cabinet version. It lacks *Space Harrier*'s bosses, but it's easily the better game thanks to far more challenging enemy attack patterns and greatly refined technology. Great music as well.

were also four distinct characters to choose from at the start of the game that range from a sexy nurse to a baseball star. Lives are no longer used either, with your Harrier now having a specific number of hearts, which are depleted whenever you get hit by *Planet Harriers*' many enemies. Characters are also blessed with a handy boost attack, useful for dodging incoming enemy fire.

Downed enemies drop gold, which can be collected and used in the Star Shops found during and at the end of *Planet Harriers*' five stages. These handy stores not only provide a brief respite from the truly hectic action that takes place outside them, but also give you access to a number of useful power-ups that range from the ability to restore your health to increasing the size of your lock-on fuel and heart bars.

Designed for one or two players, one particularly nice element of *Planet Harriers* was that it was possible to share energy between players, or increase the size of each other's life bars. This sharing element was handy, as *Planet Harriers* was a tough game that featured some outrageous bosses. There's a massive hydra that belches out huge gouts of flame, an evil giant eye with a devastating range of weaponry, and the ominously named Star Eater, an immense, many-tentacled beast with some nasty attack patterns to master.

Planet Harriers was also a stunningly beautiful game, with an impressive variety of environments crammed into its levels. One was reminiscent of the Speeder Bike chase in *Return Of The Jedi* and had you tearing through an autumnal forest and another had you flying through dangerous volcanic caverns, while the opening stage featured *NiGHTS*-style pastures and blue skies. Powered by Sega's Hikaru arcade board, it was announced for the Dreamcast but never received a port.



» [Master System] The enemies in *Space Harrier 3D* aren't as imaginative as its arcade predecessor. We're guessing Sega likes *Star Wars*.

"Space Harrier II offered people an arcade experience at home"

And that sadly ends the *Space Harrier* saga for the time being. Sega has certainly toyed with the franchise in a number of ways in the intervening years, but not to any great degree. *Space Harrier* appeared on the PS2 courtesy of Sega's *Sega Ages* range, and, unlike similar Sega updates, was pretty good. The sprites became polygons, and new power-ups – including smart bombs, a useful shield and a lock-on laser – were also added. Caught halfway between a port and an all-out remake, it's a nonetheless interesting game, and the UK compilation on which it features can be found relatively easily. A second *Sega Ages* compilation was released in 2005 and features reasonably accurate ports of *Space Harrier*, *Space Harrier 3D* and *Space Harrier II*, while other standalone ports, most notably the original arcade game and *Space Harrier II*, have appeared on the Wii's Virtual Console and iOS.

Space Harrier's simplicity and accessibility is arguably one of its biggest strengths, but it's also possibly the reason why Sega has been reluctant to return to the franchise in any meaningful way, as its core gameplay would lack substance for today's more discerning gamer. We're still hopeful for the franchise, though, and with Sega seemingly intent on delivering genuinely excellent digital content like *Daytona USA*, *Guardian Heroes* and *After Burner Climax*, we're hoping that *Space Harrier* receives the airing it so obviously deserves.

Special thanks to Kurt Kalata and Hardcore Gaming 101 for help with this article.



Power Drift

Year Released: 1988

The biggest draw of *Power Drift* was its ridiculous elevated tracks. Structured like crazy rollercoasters, tracks featured insane drops and steep climbs that proved fantastic fun to race around. *Power Drift* was also full of plenty of charm and character thanks to the roster of 12 racers, who would get animated as they tore around the cleverly designed tracks. It's another superb offering from developer Yu Suzuki.



Galaxy Force II

Year Released: 1988

This super blaster takes the best elements of *Space Harrier* and *After Burner* to create one of Sega's best shooters. Its slower pace makes it a lot easier to play than its peers, while the level design is absolutely stunning, particularly the fire stage, which features gigantic dragons that erupt from the planet's surface. It features nice gameplay mechanics such as a rapidly depleting energy bar and branching levels.

THE MAKING OF SPLAT!

There are many famous games from the early era of Spectrum gaming. However, one title not quite as fondly remembered, despite excellent reviews and an original concept that has barely been copied since, is Splat!, a multi-scrolling maze game and the first release from a new software house called Incentive. . .

Ian Andrew is a name that some of you might recognise, as the founder of the 8-bit and 16-bit software label Incentive. Famous for giving the world the Graphic Adventure Creator (GAC) and the technically astounding *Freescape* games, the company's debut title was actually devised and programmed by Ian himself. *Splat!* wasn't his first game – that was the strategy title *Mined Out* from Quicksilva – but it was the first to be published by Incentive Software.

Retro Gamer: Why did you decide to release *Splat!* under your own new company rather than with Quicksilva or another established game publisher?

Ian Andrew: Simple. The royalties I received from *Mined Out* eclipsed my then-salary so I thought, 'Why not publish the game myself?' That way I would earn the royalties from sales and also make the publisher margin on top – so Incentive was born.

RG: A brave move perhaps, but with the vibrant Spectrum gaming scene in full flow, a logical one. How did you come up with the concept behind the game?

IA: The idea came from my love of puzzles and mazes. *Splat!* is essentially a maze game with a twist: the randomly moving box that travels within it. The player controls the character [Zippy] who must constantly move to avoid getting 'splatted' against one of the walls. There are hedges, rivers and other obstacles that hamper your movement around the maze.

RG: How do you progress through the game?

IA: The ultimate aim is simply survival, although you can pick up bonuses, and these are essential for a high score – which of course was necessary if you were trying to win the £500 competition prize [see 'What's in a name?'].

RG: At the time, *Splat!* was quite different from the proliferation of shoot-'em-ups and platform games on the Spectrum.

IA: I enjoyed looking around to see what other types of games were out there, and I then just tried to do something different from everybody else. I had always liked designing mazes and making wooden pinball machines with marbles and nails when I was younger, so it developed from there.

RG: Why did you decide to make the maze random?

IA: I wanted the game to have a fresh challenge each time. The gameplay was different each time you played – in effect extending the lifespan of the game. This seemed a logical way of achieving that.

RG: And is the random maze genuinely random?

IA: Yes, as far as it used the Spectrum's BASIC Randomise function and a random call on the machine code routine. It involved lots of playtesting and tweaking.

RG: How did the routine work, exactly?

IA: The routine would make the maze head off in an arbitrary direction for a random length of time designed to avoid it scrolling too far. It also had a point where it made a bee-line for an edge so that all parts of the maze would have a high chance of being seen by the player. Eventually, it would work out where it was and head back to the end point, which was also conveniently the starting point for the next level!

RG: Was anyone else involved in *Splat!*'s creation at any point in the process?

IA: Yes – I never learned machine code, so I advertised for a programmer in a local paper. Ian Morgan answered and he was responsible for ensuring the play area moved at a fast pace while I



IN THE KNOW

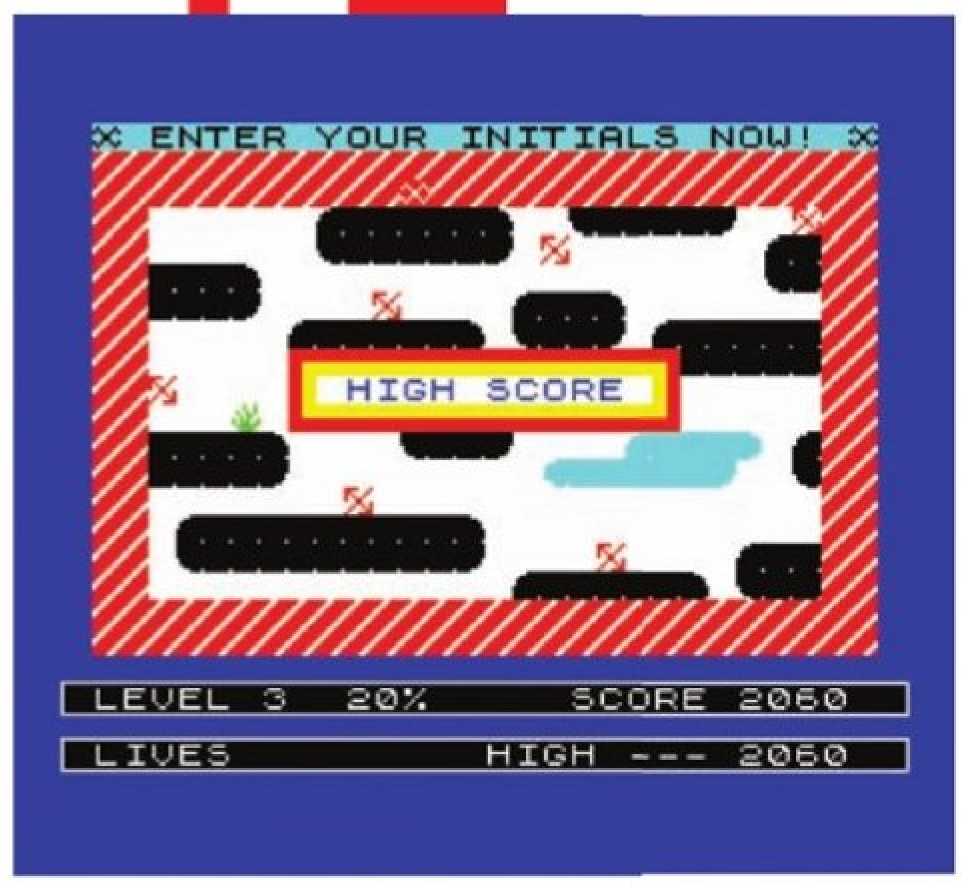
- **» PUBLISHER:** INCENTIVE SOFTWARE LTD
- **» DEVELOPER:** IAN ANDREW & IAN MORGAN
- **» RELEASED:** 1984
- **» PLATFORM:** ZX SPECTRUM, C64, AMSTRAD CPC, SAM COUPE
- **» GENRE:** MAZE

WHAT THEY SAID AT THE TIME

SPLAT! SCORED AN impressive 81.5% in the very first issue of the Spectrum magazine *Crash*. Comments from the reviewers included "the graphics are very smooth", "it keeps you on your toes", and "this is a game with growing appeal… which guarantees its addictivity." *C&VG* lavished even more praise on the game, with the reviewer calling it "one of the most addictive games I've ever played." and a good set of scores echoed this sentiment. *Personal Computer Games* reserved particular adulation for the fact you could redefine the keys (those were the days!), but fortunately loved the game as well, boasting if "*Horace* hooked you, *Splat!* will amaze you." A *Horace*-beater? No wonder Ian was so happy with the reviews…



» [ZX Spectrum] *Splat!* was re-released as part of the *4-Most Thrillers* compilation in 1992, along with *Mega-Apocalypse, The Fury* and *Vixen*.



» [ZX Spectrum] It might say 'high score', but it's a far cry from the huge score of 112,930 hit by 17-year-old James Tant, which netted him a £500 prize.



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

TOTAL ECLIPSE (PICTURED)
SYSTEMS: ZX SPECTRUM, C64, CPC, AMIGA, ST
YEAR: 1988

DRILLER
SYSTEM: ZX SPECTRUM, CPC
YEAR: 1987

CASTLE MASTER
SYSTEM: ZX SPECTRUM, C64, CPC, AMIGA, ST, PC
YEAR: 1990

concentrated on the game design and basic programming.

RG: Were there any problems during programming, and how long did it take to put together?

IA: I think it all worked pretty well, but the limitations of the ZX Spectrum's screen design – the game elements had to be made up of character-sized blocks and each of these could only contain two colours – were restrictive. I don't think this influenced the gameplay too much, though, and the game took around six months to complete."

RG: *Splat!* was also special for being one of the first Spectrum games that featured any synthesised speech.

IA: Yes, the 'Yippee' speech – indeed, I think it was the one of the first examples of speech, but it wasn't really noticed at the time and it caused me quite a headache. The master tapes were all ready for production when we noticed that the 'Yippee' that appeared on the screen was spelt incorrectly. I was tempted to go to production anyway but was persuaded to redo all the tapes. That wasn't a very pleasant experience!

RG: *Splat!* was very successful commercially. What do you think made it such a hit?

IA: I remember thinking back then that I had a game that was special and different and that was also being released at a very good time. But I guess mainly it was its originality, as it wasn't a clone of an existing Spectrum game or arcade machine. *Splat!* was also thoroughly playtested: I watched family and friends play it and made tweaks to the gameplay based on these observations. My mother, in particular, was very helpful in this respect.

RG: After its release, *Splat!* also gained some extremely positive reviews and scores. Presumably you were pleased with the critical reception it received?

> I was on such a high when I read the reviews and I felt like a pop star at the time. It was the most amazing feeling

IA: Yes, that was very important to me. I was on such a high when I read the reviews and I felt like a pop star at the time. It was the most amazing feeling for a 23 year-old and a huge rush – it's just a shame I never became quite as big a star as Matthew Smith [of *Manic Miner* and *Jet Set Willy* fame]!

RG: Finally, with the basic premise of *Splat!* still untapped, the notion of a 21st Century update must be on your mind?

IA: I am thinking about a remake, and may well start working on it soon, so watch my current free games site – www.originalgames.com – for further updates in the future.

RG: And as for the original?

IA: I'm still very proud of it. Even after the success of several of Incentive's well-known titles, I've always loved the creation and design aspect of games so much more than the business side. *Splat!* was the real starting point of my game designing career, so I will always have very fond memories of it.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

IAN ANDREW NAMED his company from an idea: he wanted each of its games to include an extra 'incentive' to be bought. With *Splat!*, this encouragement was in the form of a £500 reward for the highest scorer, judged by having a 'hi-code' generator incorporated into the game. A code was given to the player upon completing the game which corresponded to their final score. The prize was won by James Tant, who admitted in *Sinclair User* to honing his skills from playing the game five to seven hours a night, non-stop for three months – some serious splatting! Another added bonus was a series of free 'Splat Mats' (essentially *Splat!*-style beer mats) available to anyone who took their time to send an SAE to Incentive headquarters…





In the chair with...

BRUCE EVERISS

Bruce Everiss was the public face of Imagine Software and was there when the company came spectacularly crashing down on camera. He tells Paul Drury about creating megagames, selling dreams and how to put on a show

FROM A BACKGROUND in accountancy, Bruce took an interest in the world of microcomputers and decided to open his own computer shop at the end of the Seventies. It became a hub for the Liverpool software scene and led to him becoming a key figure at Imagine Software. After the company imploded, he joined Codemasters and played an important role in its early success. He is currently the chief marketing officer for Kwalee, a smartphone apps developer.

RETRO GAMER: Napoleon called the British "a nation of shopkeepers", and in July 1978 that's exactly what you became.
BRUCE EVERISS: I'd trained as an accountant and, by then, I was the managing director of a computerised book-keeping company. I was getting computer trade magazines like *Computing* and *Computer Weekly*. I read these articles about microprocessors, these hobby computers and computer stores that were starting to appear in America. I thought, 'If they can have them, why can't we?'

RG: So you opened Microdigital in Liverpool's Brunswick Street, probably the first dedicated computer shop in Britain. Were there actually many computers to stock back then?
BE: Finding something to sell was hard! We had the Apple II, pre-disk drive, just a cassette interface machine; the MK14 [Sinclair's first home computer] that we got from Uncle Clive; and a kit called the Nascom 1. That had 1,200 solder joints on the kit!

RG: That doesn't sound like the sort of thing little Johnny was putting on his Christmas list.
BE: It was hobbyists coming into the shop. The kind of people that had telexes at home. We imported huge numbers of books and that's what gave us our daily turnover – books, books, books! We also made a lot of money selling blank cassettes.

RG: Blank cassettes? So little Johnny could copy the latest games and swap them in the school playground?
BE: In those days, there were no games to copy! They were for saving your own programs. I had C15s made with no leader, just straight into the magnetic tape, which was much more convenient. I invented those short-run cassettes and we sold mountains.

RG: So when did games arrive in your shop?
BE: In 1979, I travelled to Orange County, California, and visited a store called Computer Components. Along one of their walls was a noticeboard with polythene bags pinned to it, with cassettes in them. They were arcade games people had written for the Apple II. *Space Invaders*, *Galaxian*… I bought handfuls and brought them back to sell in Microdigital. I think they may have been the first commercially available games in this country.

RG: Your shop must have become something of a hub for the burgeoning computer scene.
BE: Yes, especially at weekends. I knew people who knew a lot about computers; people at Liverpool University and in the local computer club. There was a thirst for knowledge. I was doing a big trade in importing American computer magazines, like *Byte* and one called *Dr Dobb's Journal*. It had in-depth



"You're selling a dream with products like games. Sex, drugs and rock and roll!"

SELECTED TIMELINE

- **Arcadia** 1982
- **Wacky Waiters** 1982
- **Ah Diddums** 1983
- **Alchemist** 1983
- **Catcha Snatcher** 1983
- **Jumping Jack** 1983
- **Schizoids** 1983
- **Stonkers** 1983
- **Zip Zap** 1983
- **Zzoom** 1983
- **BC Bill** 1984
- **Pedro** 1984
- **ATV Simulator** 1987
- **BMX Simulator** 1987
- **Dizzy** 1987
- **Fruit Machine Simulator** 1987
- **Grand Prix Simulator** 1987
- **Professional Ski Simulator** 1987
- **Super Robin Hood** 1987
- **TOCA Race Driver** 2002
- **Colin McRae Rally 3** 2003
- **LMA Manager 2004** 2004

techy articles and I thought, 'Let's do something like that!' So we launched the *Liverpool Software Gazette* in 1979 and I got one of my staff, Carl Phillips, to edit it. You'll find it all on Wikipedia!

RG: Didn't many of your staff go on to have careers in the games industry?

BE: Tim Best was a salesman I pinched from Dixons and he went on to Imagine, Mirrorsoft and System 3. Mark Butler was one of my sales staff too and, of course, he was a director at Imagine. Paul Fullwood became head of studios at Hasbro and MicroProse. Andrew Sinclair went on to Ocean and US Gold and became a lecturer at Liverpool John Moores University. Eugene Evans hung around the shop at weekends so we ended up employing him as a Saturday boy, to help the customers and make the tea. He went on to join Imagine as a programmer.

RG: You ended up selling Microdigital to electrical retailer Laskys in 1981. Was that a difficult decision?

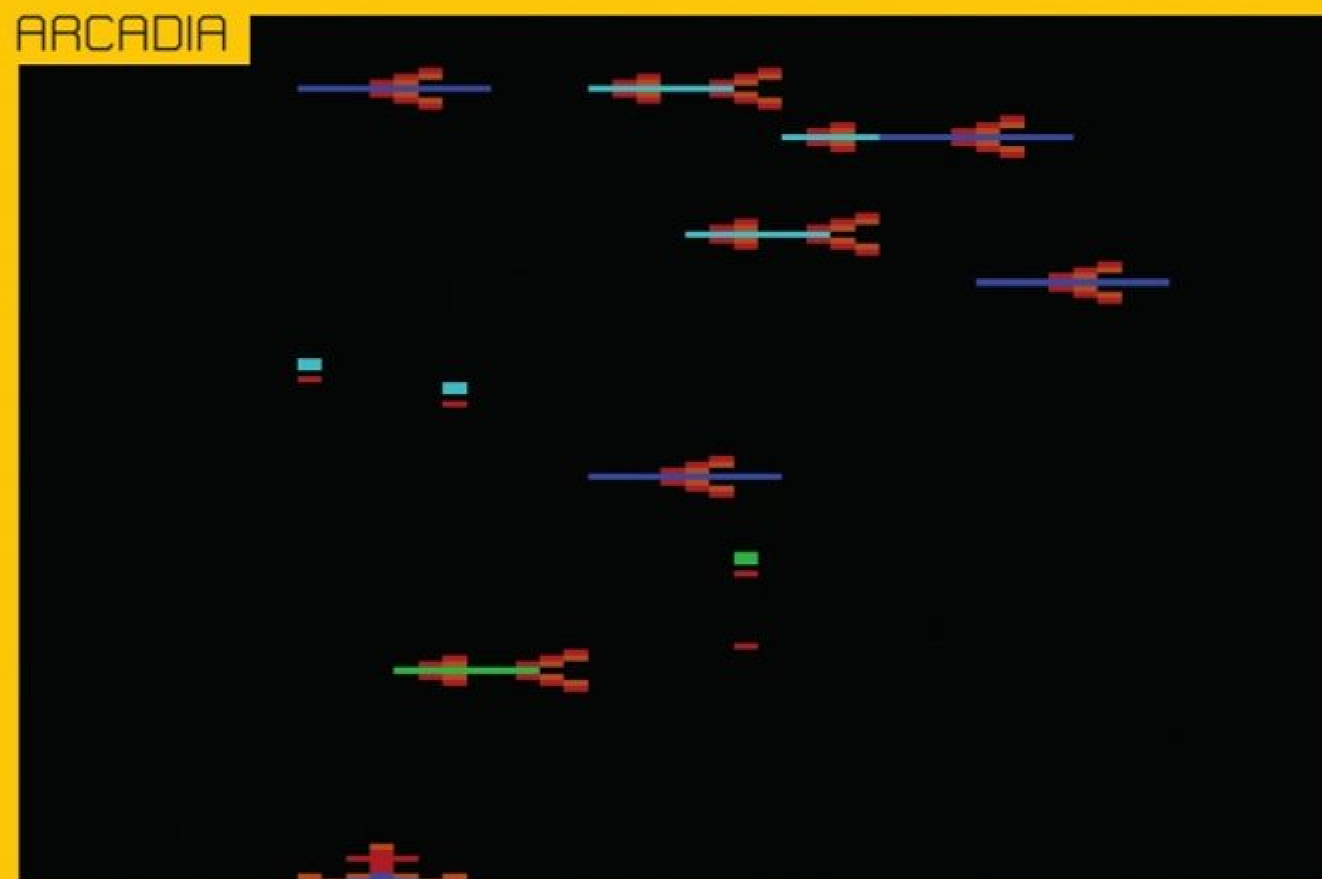
BE: Oh no, no. It let me go nationwide – we had stores within stores across the country. Plus they put me through their management training mill, which was interesting. I left them when it was getting too corporate and started doing consultancy work, including some for Bug Byte. They'd employed Mark and Eugene, two of my ex-staff, and they had Dave Lawson.

RG: So when Mark Butler and Dave Lawson left Bug Byte to set up Imagine Software, did you follow them?

BE: I was there on day one and on day two they said, 'You'd better join us.' Dave had written *Arcadia* and that's what we founded the business on. The rumour was he wrote both

* FIVE TO PLAY

ARCADIA



IN 1982, THE gulf in quality between what you could expect from a coin-op title and the sort of stuff you'd play on your humble home micro was huge. Then *Arcadia* arrived, a blisteringly fast shoot-'em-up that didn't require the insertion of coins. Most players' first experience was measured in seconds, such was the relentlessness of the assailants. Each wave had its own character, and the fact that your ship was forever floating downwards gave the game an odd, underwater feel. The VIC-20 version was especially challenging given the narrow confines of the playfield and remains one of the machine's finer moments. And we shouldn't underestimate the impact of the professional-looking cover and cassette inlay, which, together with some bold advertising, proudly proclaimed Imagine's arrival on the scene. Better blasters followed, but this was a valiant attempt to bring the arcade into your bedroom in those pioneering days.

ZZOOM



A DECENT STAB at first-person aerial combat and especially memorable for allowing the murder of the refugees you're supposed to be protecting, *Zzoom* also signified an important development at Imagine. Bruce: "One day, I found John Gibson [the programmer] seething. I asked him what was wrong. He said he was having trouble doing the clouds for *Zzoom*. Studio Sting was just upstairs, the advertising agency associated with us, so I grabbed one of their artists, brought him down and said, 'Can you make those clouds look like clouds using this graph paper?' He took ten minutes… I think that was the first time an artist had worked on a game."

JUMPING JACK



GUIDE YOUR STICKMAN through the gaps in a series of moving platforms, avoiding enemies and headaches, until you reach the top of the screen. Then do it again with more nasties. It's hardly high-concept stuff and the graphics look like they were drawn by a four-year-old with crayons, yet this is arguably Imagine's best release. It's fiendishly addictive and becomes a real test of nerve as the platforms fill with an increasing number of foes. Each leap upwards becomes a risky manoeuvre, necessitating some desperate dashes off one side of the screen to reappear on the other, just in time to out run that steaming train and bound through that hole in the wall.

DIZZY: THE ULTIMATE CARTOON ADVENTURE



THE MOST FAMOUS creation of Philip and Andrew Oliver, *Dizzy* was a major success in the early days of Codemasters. This first outing established the mix of platforming, puzzling and whimsy. It was also brutally difficult, and the ability to only hold a single item at a time, along with the numerous deadly hazards in your path, mean this will frustrate as much as it charms. The game was also a reminder to Bruce that you don't need a big team and colossal hype to produce a hit. "I discovered the ideal number of people on an 8-bit game is two programmers, an external graphics artist and an external musician. Like the Oliver twins and *Dizzy*."

BMX SIMULATOR



THE '*SIMULATOR*' SERIES proved to be a real money-spinner for Codemasters, and we reckon this one is most deserving of a revisit. A top-down racer in the *Sprint* tradition, this added banks, ramps and incredibly tight cornering to proceedings, meaning you often spent as much time spread-eagled on the track as in the saddle. Though you could pedal against a computer opponent, it came into its own when played against a mate, typically resulting in more collisions than Hamilton and Massa. Written by David Darling, we wonder whether he's considered an iOS version of this as part of his new apps adventure…

the Spectrum and VIC-20 versions in a day. Back then, you could only sell games direct by mail order. Most people were doing it out of their kitchens. We were the first to do this as a proper business. I put together a telesales team and we'd get the Yellow Pages from all over Britain, and we'd ring every newsagent, electronics shop and camera shop and try to get them to sell videogames. We created the whole retail structure for games in the UK. Then I got in two sales girls that spoke European languages and we started doing the same across Europe. We doubled our turnover every month. In our second year of trading, running up to Christmas, we were turning over a million pounds a month. In those days, that was quite a lot of money!

RG: We suppose that explains the fast cars and wanton excess that became synonymous with Imagine…

BE: We were selling cassettes at a trade price of £2-something and they cost us 15p. We had a lot of money. To buy a £30,000 Ferrari was not a significant purchase!

RG: That reminds us of the story published in the *Daily Star* about your teenage programmer Eugene Evans being on £35,000 a year and having a flash car, even though he was too young to drive.

BE: We did buy him a Lotus Esprit, but remember, in those days you only had to put down the deposit and pay for it in monthly instalments! He did drive it for a few weeks… before he wrote it off.

RG: You sound like you were trying to create a brand image for Imagine of money and glamour…

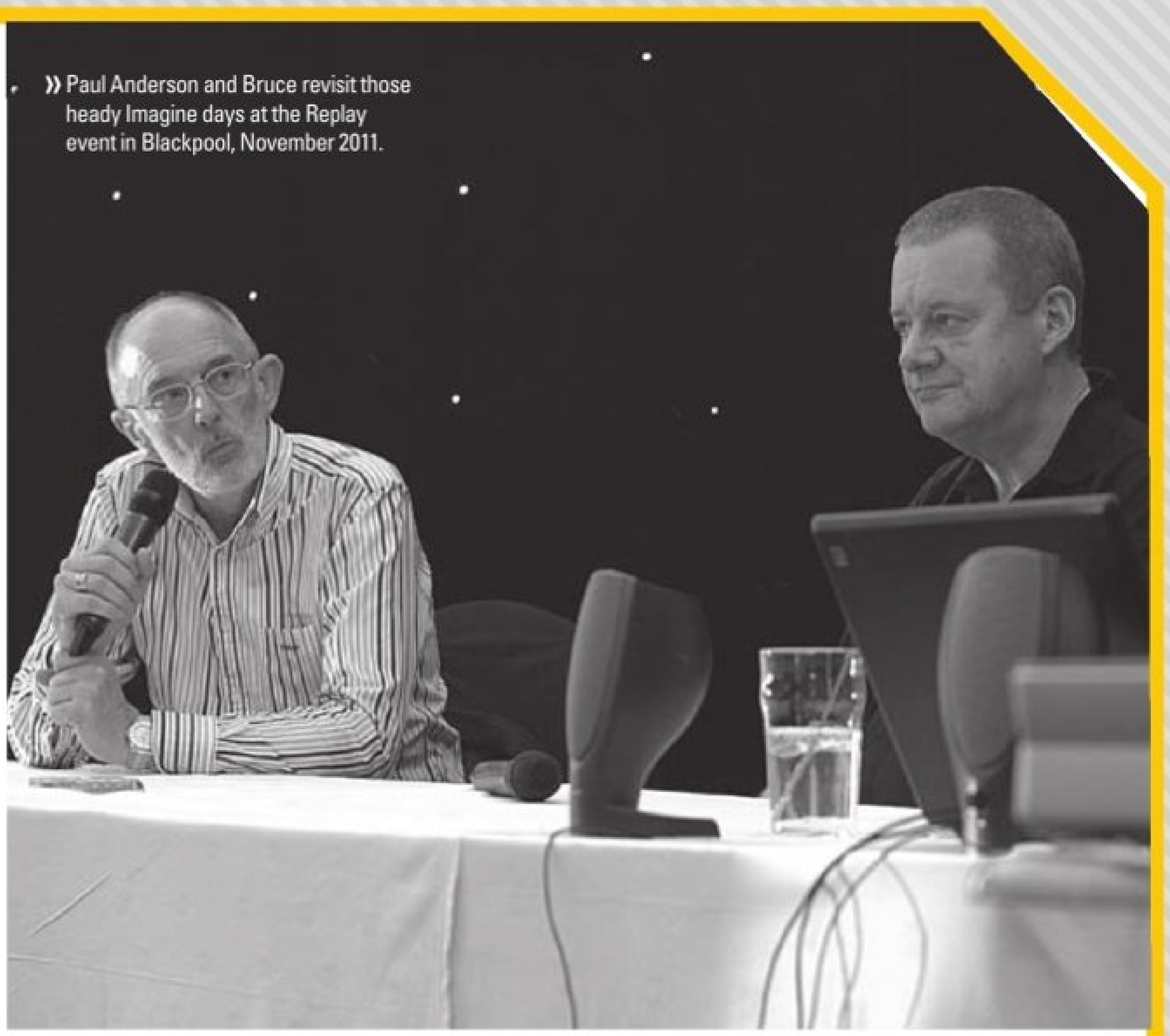
BE: Absolutely. Sex, drugs and rock and roll! You're selling a dream with intellectual property products. If you treat them like vacuum cleaners, you're not going to sell any. Dave Henry Lawson said to me: 'Bruce, I want you to create a cult.' Those were his very words.

RG: So, in 1984, you were approached by the BBC's *Commercial Breaks* documentary team, who wanted to capture this booming British success story in this exciting new industry.

BE: My thought was that there's no such thing as bad publicity, so get 'em in!

RG: It didn't end well, though, did it?

BE: A triple whammy killed off the company. First, we got a contract to make games for Marshall Cavendish, and when that collapsed we should have gotten rid of staff, but Dave Lawson was greedy and said: 'Let's keep them on to make games for us.' Suddenly our overheads shot up with paying all these people, but they never produced anything. The second was we kept moving offices to these prestige places in town and kept the old ones on. Thirdly, piracy came along and sales just stopped. The kids discovered tape-to-tape copying and they weren't paying money for games. Our turnover collapsed. If you look at a list of Spectrum companies from that time, they all went bust!



» Paul Anderson and Bruce revisit those heady Imagine days at the Replay event in Blackpool, November 2011.

> "We were turning over a million pounds a month. A £30,000 Ferrari was not a significant purchase!"

RG: What about *Bandersnatch* and *Psyclapse*, the two megagames that Imagine was promoting and supposed to be developing?

BE: They started as an anti-piracy measure, like Lenslok. It was my idea. Put a dongle in with the game that you had to plug into the back of the Spectrum, with just a resistor or capacitor on it, and the game had to look for it before it would play. But David Lawson always wanted to do things bigger and better and said: 'Let's put more memory on it and do a bigger game!'

RG: Did the idea get very far?

BE: We put a ROM on it and you could page lumps of code in and out of the Spectrum's memory, virtually instantly. If it had been produced, it would have been pretty damn cool.

RG: What about the games themselves? How near were they to release?

BE: The actual teams writing the games weren't doing any work. They were coming in, messing about, having a laugh. There were fire extinguisher fights. David believed in creative freedom and didn't believe in managing creative people. It was a failure of management. When he had one person making a game, like with John Gibson, that was fine, but put four together and you didn't get four times more productivity; you got less.

RG: Yet you kept hyping the games up in the press, with all those full-page adverts promising the earth.

BE: Great adverts, but they were bullshit. There was nothing underneath. I had no screenshots available, so what could I do? I had to do something to fill the gap.

RG: You were actually there when the bailiffs arrived, unlike the owners of the company, who were conspicuous by their absence.

BE: Mark and David had gone off to America to try and do some deal and never told me.

RG: Did you feel like a captain going down with his ship?

BE: Listen, when I was a kid, my mother said to me: 'Bruce, one day, you're going to die. You're going to die if you worry or you don't worry.' I was brought up with that philosophy, so I don't worry.

RG: There's something quite liberating about going through life with that kind of fatalism.

BE: She'd also say, 'A hundred years from now, no one will know you existed,' so when something like [Imagine Software collapsing] is happening, I quite enjoy it. Relieves the boredom.

RG: After Imagine went bankrupt, you wrote a lengthy article in *Your Computer* magazine, identifying many factors that destroyed the company in your view. Notably, you don't mention software piracy. Why have you changed your mind?

BE: I was bitter and twisted and was trying to put the blame on people I didn't like. Everyone knew piracy had ripped the heart out of the industry. That was a given and there was no point putting it in.

RG: In 1985, you took on a role at Tansoft, where you said your role was "to make the Oric Atmos take its rightful place in the market". That's a big ask…

BE: It was a nicely made machine but lacked software support. I went round all the software houses saying, 'You should make your games for



» [Spectrum] *Alchemist* was written by the late Ian Weatherburn, who also worked on *Bandersnatch*.

this machine too,' but by that time they were all going bust. Tape-to-tape copying came along and then the industry was dead.

RG: But they weren't all going bust. Ocean Software even ended up buying the Imagine name and continued trading for years.

BE: I know Ocean carried on, but they weren't a games company any more. They were a merchandising company for film brands like *Rambo*. Ultimate got out of it by becoming Nintendo developers. Codemasters' response was to make games so cheap you wouldn't bother to pirate them.

> "When I was a kid, my mother said to me, 'You're going to die whether you worry or not,' so I don't worry"

RG: You actually joined Codemasters in 1986. How did that come about?

BE: They did an advert in *Computer Trade Weekly* as if it was proper editorial and I liked that. It was irreverent and so I rang them up and said: 'I could work with you.' I drove to Banbury and spoke to Jim Darling and his sons, David and Richard, and they said they'd have me in for two days a week. Jim, the dad, is a fantastic businessman, the best I've met in my life. People don't realise how much he had to do with the success at Codies.

RG: You had some good years with the company, then?

BE: The budget price of the games meant they could be a compulsive purchase. We got racks of our games into lots of places, like petrol stations. The Darlings understood what marketing was and they gave me a free hand. We got the turnover to over 27 per cent of the total UK games industry in the first year of trading. That was down to Jim's astute business sense, his sons' great products, and me being allowed to run amok!

RG: Around this time you set up the All Formats Computer Fair and began running events across the country. Why the change?

BE: I wanted to be my own boss again. I set up a business running one-day events all over Britain. It was very hard work, immense, lots of 100-hour weeks. When you're halfway up a ladder, putting a sign on a lamppost in the middle of Leeds at five in the morning with the sleet coming in horizontal at you, knowing that you're making a loss while you're building up the business, you need to be a bit masochistic to keep going. But I did, for over 20 years!

RG: You rejoined Codemasters in 2001 as head of communications. We imagine things had changed a bit by then…

BE: It had gone from a small, family company to a huge corporate business. It was a different world.

RG: After leaving Codemasters in 2005, you began writing your blog, Bruce On Games. What was the impetus for starting that?

BE: I just like writing. There are about 900 articles on it and it's had 1.5 million visitors, so it's not doing too badly. It was like an extended CV: hey, world, this guy with all this knowledge is available to hire!

RG: One of the reasons for its popularity is you don't shy away from controversy, which landed you in a libel trial with the company behind MMORPG *Evony*.

BE: People think I'm outspoken when I'm just saying how it is. *Evony* were trying to pretend to be something they weren't. Their game was a cynical money-making machine, up to a fair amount of naughtiness, and I just wrote it all down. They got stroppy and tried to sue me but I won because I didn't libel them.

RG: Your most recent role is at Kwalee, an apps developer set up by your former boss at Codemasters, David Darling.

BE: David sold Codies for so much money he never has to work again, but he got bored and so he's put a lump of his considerable fortune into Kwalee. He has a clear idea of the products he wants to produce and it's a joy to work with him again. I've been involved in a lot of start-ups so I know what it's like – hard work and lots of risks. But it's always enjoyable and rewarding being involved at the start. This is the perfect job for me.

RG: Looking back, you must be proud that with Imagine and Codemasters, you helped create the modern games business, with slick advertising and product packaging, professional marketing and brand recognition. Are you?

BE: I'd been taught how to be a businessman during my time in accountancy. I knew how to build up a business, like I did with my computer store. And putting credits on the inlay cards to show who had made the games; they do it in film and music, so I thought, 'Let's do it with our people!'

RG: You also pioneered other, less palatable aspects of the modern industry, like hype, excess and vapourware. Are you ashamed of any of that?

BE: No, not really.

Thanks to Martyn Carroll, Richard Burton, World of Spectrum and Replay photographers Jamie 'Juice' Mann and Starshipcommand for their contributions.



*NUMBER CRUNCHING

1: The number of days it allegedly took Dave Lawson to write *Arcadia*.

16: The number of games released by the original incarnation of Imagine Software

16: The number of games released under the Imagine label after it was bought by Ocean

19: The number of years Bruce ran All Formats Computer Fair events

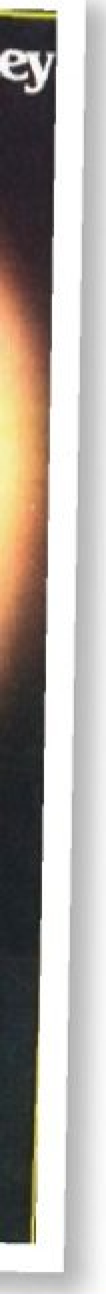
£40: The predicted retail price of *Bandersnatch*

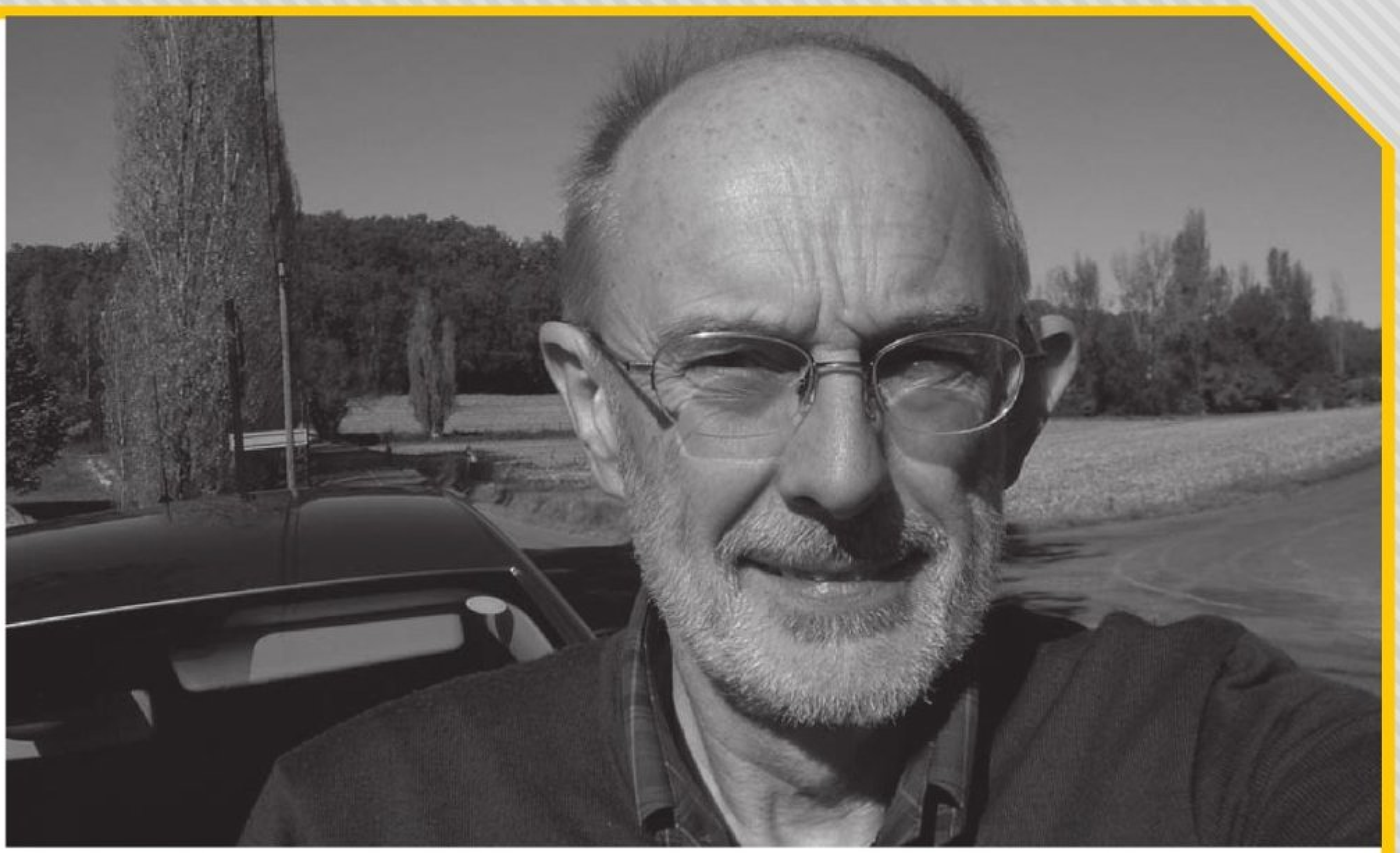
353½: The number of salad sandwiches consumed during the development of the fabled megagames, according to the 'Progress Report' advert

1986: The year when Codemasters was founded. Bruce joined the same year

£50,000: The reputed monthly wage bill for Imagine at the end

£30,000,000: The amount Imagine was claiming to be worth, shortly before the collapse of the company, as revealed in issue 7 of *Crash* magazine





Q&A WITH PAUL ANDERSON

Retro Gamer speaks to the producer of the infamous Commercial Breaks BBC documentary about capturing Imagine's very public meltdown on film

RG: What was your role at the BBC back in 1984?
PA: I was working in the department called 'Science and Features'. We were responsible for all the science programming: *Tomorrow's World*, *Horizon*, all the big series like *Ascent Of Man* and *Your Life In Their Hands*.

RG: So how did you end up making a documentary about the dawning of the British software industry?
PA: I'd been trying to do something about hackers but had only received indifference from my senior producers, so I changed my idea to 'who are these young people making these computer games?' I read everything I could and I remember going to a computer club in Manchester on a wet Tuesday in October and there were 40 incredibly geeky kids there! Everyone seemed to be talking about this game *Arcadia*. I did a research trip to Imagine and then returned to film.

RG: Did you notice cracks in the company straight away?
PA: Oh yes. There was so much hype. Bruce Everiss had a Ferrari parked on the street. There had been something about them on local TV and they'd hyped themselves up to be the Beatles of the software industry. These kids, all a bit rough and ready and full of themselves. They were using Apple Lisas, which nobody else had, and I remember they had these visitors' badges that looked like something off an early episode of *Star Trek*.

RG: What did you make of the owners, Mark Butler and Dave Lawson?
PA: Without being libellous, I thought one was very bright and the other seemed more like a footballer. I won't say which was which. They were both really shifty with me, which made me uneasy. 'What have they got to hide?' I thought. There was all this secrecy about this game *Bandersnatch* that was taking months and months…

RG: What about Bruce?
PA: He was the educated manager, the business guru. He was super slick and very glib. I imagine he was a very good salesman.

RG: You were actually there filming when the bailiffs arrived…
PA: You just had this feeling that something was going to happen. No one was doing any work, Bruce was flying from one room to another, Mark and Dave were nowhere to be seen. I remember going to the pub for lunch with the staff and I said to the cameraman: 'I want you to be running from the moment we get into the building.' As the lift doors opened, the camera was running and we caught all that as it happened, all the door pushing and, 'I've left my bag in there!' I'm in that shot. That was me putting my foot in the door!

RG: You really captured a moment there, but you must have been worried that your documentary was in trouble.
PA: I'd been over to Manchester and was already filming Ocean. Mark and Dave were being so evasive I knew I needed a Plan B. Dave Ward at Ocean was such a different personality and his people were so business-like and straight. There wasn't this hype. I remember we were there when a kid [Jonathan 'Joffa' Smith] came in with his game, *Pud Pud*. That was so of the time. It really was people doing it in their bedrooms. Imagine was the first games company that was trying to be bigger and brasher, but they were just over-hyping themselves.


1P: 001000
1P
2P



» RETROREVIVAL

Target: Renegade

HOW IMAGINE SOFTWARE BEAT TECHNOS AT ITS OWN GAME

» ZX SPECTRUM
» IMAGINE SOFTWARE
» 1988

Imagine's conversion of *Renegade* proved extremely popular on home formats when it was ported in 1987. But what do you do when you want to follow up the success of the original arcade game, but don't have an actual sequel to port? Imagine did the only thing it could: it approached Technos and gained permission to make its own sequels.

Renegade III: The Final Chapter was an abomination and is best forgotten, but *Target: Renegade*, Imagine's first sequel, was a truly wonderful piece of work that still holds up brilliantly today. Everything about *Target: Renegade* was bigger, bolder and quite simply better than Imagine's already superb port of *Renegade*. By far the most significant improvement was the inclusion of a second player, which added tremendously to the on- screen proceedings and gave *Target: Renegade* an exciting dynamic that wasn't found in the original game. Playing with a mate was tremendous fun, especially as you could 'accidentally' hit them, and it effortlessly replicated the same arcade thrills that were popular in games like *Double Dragon*.

Weapons also played a part in *Target: Renegade*'s appeal, with your character now able to use knives, hammers and even pool cues in order to dish out cold street justice to the many thugs he encountered. While weapons featured in *Renegade*, you couldn't actually use them, giving computer owners another reason to prefer *Target: Renegade* over the original arcade game.

Lastly, the game itself was simply a hell of a lot of fun to play, and, while it featured cartoon British stereotypes over its five multiload levels, the humour and detail packed into each stage meant that you'd always push forward to see what came next.

All the 8-bit versions of *Target: Renegade* were good fun, but the C64 version didn't fare as well, mainly because it lacked the second player. It's hard to choose between the Amstrad and Spectrum versions, however, as they're essentially the same game. We obviously prefer the colour and chunky visuals of the CPC game, but there's no denying that the Spectrum outing is just as good. So much, in fact, that it was never bettered on the system by any other scrolling fighter. *

RETRORATED



>> Yes, some of these games are already out, but now you know what to spend your Christmas money on. Nintendo's last Zelda game for the Wii amazes, while The King Of Fighters has a triumphant return. Enjoy!

PICKS OF THE MONTH



DARRAN
The Legend Of Zelda: Skyward Sword
Gaming doesn't get much better than this.



STUART
Mario Kart 7
An excellent addition to the series, which is a real return to the racing of the original game.



DAVID
The Legend Of Zelda: Skyward Sword
Magical – we still haven't seen everything Hyrule has to offer.

The Legend Of Zelda: Skyward Sword

NINTENDO CELEBRATES LINK'S BIRTHDAY WITH STYLE

INFORMATION

- **FEATURED SYSTEM:** Wii
- **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A
- **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- **PRICE:** £49.99
- **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
- **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- **PLAYERS:** 1

BRIEF HISTORY

» *The Legend Of Zelda* was first released in 1986 for Nintendo's NES. It has gone on to become one of Nintendo's most popular franchises, and has appeared on every Nintendo system with the exception of the Virtual Boy. *Skyward Sword* has been a massive five years in the making, and will be the last *Zelda* game on the Wii.



» [Wii] The addition of MotionPlus add a palpable sense of control to all of Link's varied moves and abilities.

GO DEEPER

The facts behind Skward Sword

>> Shigeru Miyamoto first revealed that Nintendo was working on a new *Zelda* game in 2008.

>> In terms of canon, *Skyward Sword* is actually a prequel to *Ocarina Of Time*.

>> A Limited Edition version of *Skyward Sword* is also available. It includes a gold MotionPlus Remote and costs £59.99.



After 25 years of exploring dungeons, donning that iconic green suit and chasing after Zelda's affections, Link has finally come of age. Nintendo has crafted a truly beautiful game that not only celebrates the quarter of a century that came before it, but also takes the franchise in exciting new directions.

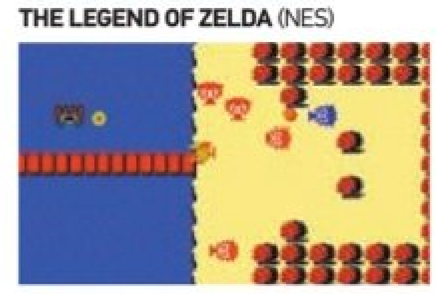
This is most noticeable in the new MotionPlus-enhanced controls. You still kill familiar adversaries and utilise age-old moves, but never has it felt so involving and intuitive. The control makes Link's sword feel like an extension of your wrist, and whether you're battling bosses, hitting items with your catapult, or navigating the skies of Skyloft (Link's hub-like home town) on your giant Loftwing, you'll be impressed by the immersion offered.

The same can be said for Link himself, who is far more agile than in past games – sprinting through fields, deftly balancing on tightropes, or effortlessly swinging on vines. It's a subtle but important change of direction for the evergreen hero, as his athleticism plays a crucial part in *Skyward Sword*'s beautifully crafted dungeons.



WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA (NES)



▽ SOMETHING NEW
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TWILIGHT PRINCESS (Wii)



OPINION



Is this the best 3D *Zelda*? The jury will be out for many, but there's no denying that both Link and Nintendo are on fantastic form. Imaginative design and interesting new equipment ensure that *Skyward Sword* feels fresh and exciting, while remaining familiar to fans.

Stuart Hunt



Arguably as good as anything found in *Ocarina Of Time* or *A Link To The Past*, the dungeons of *Skyward Sword* are intricately designed and are often far removed from the torch-lighting and block-moving puzzles of previous adventures. Newly acquired items are key to tackling puzzles or boss fights, but the way they are implemented is far superior. This is mainly due to the effectiveness of the MotionPlus controller, but it's also thanks to director Hidemaro Fujibayashi effortlessly distilling 25 years' worth of adventures into one single 30-plus-hour adventure. An unmissable game and a suitable swansong for Nintendo's console.

In a Nutshell

Skyward Sword **is a fitting tribute to** ***Zelda*****'s past, but an exciting promise of things to come. Here's to the next 25 years.**

>> Score **97%**

Sonic Generations 3D

NOT THE CELEBRATION WE WERE EXPECTING

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** 3DS » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** XBOX 360, PS3, PC » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** £39.99 » **PUBLISHER:** SEGA » **DEVELOPER:** DIMPS » **PLAYERS:** 1-2



***Sonic Generations 3D* starts off brilliantly. Unlike its home console counterpart, the classic levels of early *Sonic* stages are exact copies, albeit exact copies with stunning HD makeovers.** They're great fun, with Classic Sonic feeling extremely similar in physics to his Mega Drive counterpart, and playing the same as well. What a pity, then, that later zones can't match the brilliance of Green Hill, Casino Night and Mushroom Hill.

The main issue we have with the Classic levels is that developer Dimps has simply given Sonic some of the attacks – most notably the homing jump – that he later acquired in his handheld games; all well and good, but when they're already being used in the Modern Sonic stages, it comes across as lazy, as if Dimps couldn't be bothered to work out how to utilise Classic Sonic's abilities in the later games in the series. This has the knock-on effect that *Sonic Generations* on 3DS doesn't feel as much of a celebration of the franchise as it did on the home consoles, which is something of a missed opportunity and at odds with *Sonic Generations*' concept.

The Modern stages fare a little better, mainly because Dimps has been perfecting the style since *Sonic The Hedgehog: Pocket Adventure*. Yes, there are still annoying death pits, and yes, there's an over-reliance on the homing jump to make your way through stages, but the zones are just as well designed as anything found in past handheld *Sonic* games. Once the main adventure is over, which won't take long at all, longevity is provided by numerous challenges, which this time don't require completion in order to unlock bosses.

Sonic Generations is certainly a fun platformer, but it hasn't had as much care and attention bestowed on it as the home versions. As a result, it's not as easy to recommend.

>> Score **68%**



» [3DS] Fan-favourite levels from early *Sonic* titles are recreated beautifully here.



OPINION



Well, this is a real missed opportunity. After the enjoyable home versions of *Sonic Generations*, we had high hopes for Sonic's first 3DS outing. Sadly it's a disappointing release that's perfectly competent, but not a patch on past portable *Sonic* adventures.

Stuart Hunt



Tekken Hybrid

» **SYSTEM:** PS3
» **PRICE:** £30.99 » **PLAYERS:** 1-2

>> **Forget the** movie and the fun but limited demo of *Tekken Tag Tournament 2: Prologue*, as they're just trimmings. The real reason for this compilation is the HD makeover of *Tekken Tag Tournament*. It looks as good as you'd expect, and the roster of characters impresses, but its old-school combat mechanics are quite hard to swallow. An enjoyable brawler for sure, but there are far better alternatives available.

>> Score **70%**



PixelJunk SideScroller

» **SYSTEM:** PS3
» **PRICE:** £6.29 » **PLAYERS:** 1-2

>> **We've been enjoying** Q-Games' latest shooter, and not just because it riffs heavily on *Gradius*. Resplendent in its gorgeous vector-style visuals and sporting an extremely tough (but fair) challenge, it's another solid addition to the *PixelJunk* range. It's a little short and it doesn't blend the various elements as cleverly as *PixeJunk Shooter 2* did, but it's a finely crafted shoot-'em-up.

>> Score **80%**



DoDonPachi Resurrection

» **SYSTEM:** XBOX 360
» **PRICE:** £29.99 » **PLAYERS:** 1-2

>> **Good old Rising** Star Games. After impressing us with *Deathsmiles*, it's back with another Cave conversion. This time there aren't as many modes, but *DoDonPachi Resurrection*'s excellent gameplay shines through. Refined score mechanics, in-your-face visuals and some gigantic bosses combine to create another enjoyable instalment of Cave's franchise. As accessible as it is fun.

>> Score **89%**



Frogger 3D

» **SYSTEM:** 3DS
» **PRICE:** £39.99 » **PLAYERS:** 1

>> **After enjoying *Frogger*** *Decades* on iOS, we were expecting similar things from *Frogger*'s first 3D outing. Sadly, Konami's latest *Frogger* game leaves a lot to be desired. New elements have been added, and the 3D is effective, but many of its opening levels are simplistic and repetitive. Things pick up later on, with a bigger emphasis on more deliberate play, but it remains nothing more than an above-average platformer.

>> Score **62%**

3DS







» [3DS] Several new power-ups appear in *Mario Kart 7*. This tail allows you to swipe at nearby racers for a limited time.





✱ GO DEEPER

The facts behind Mario Kart 7

>> Retro handled the classic tracks, while Nintendo EAD worked on the new courses.

>> In addition to the standard Grand Prix, *Mario Kart 7* also features Times Trials, Balloon Battle and Coin Battle modes.

✱ WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD

SUPER MARIO KART (SNES)



▽ SOMETHING NEW

SONIC & SEGA ALL-STARS RACING (PS3)



NINTENDO'S HIT FRANCHISE TURNS A CORNER

Mario Kart 7



***Mario Kart 7* is the biggest departure to the series so far, and proves that there's still plenty of life left in Nintendo's 20-year old franchise.**

The biggest change to the core *Mario Kart* formula is that your kart is now equipped to soar through the sky or drive underwater. Rather than simply feeling gimmicky, both genuinely add to the overall experience, especially the hang-gliding, which enables skilled players to miss out sections of the track, or hamper the progress of opponents.

In many ways the hang-glider, which is only used on the biggest of jumps, actually feels like an extension of *Super Mario Kart*'s feather, and it adds a layer of strategy to proceedings not seen in more recent iterations of the franchise.

Customisation is also a big deal in *Mario Kart 7*, with new parts being awarded for every 50 coins you collect while racing. The five parameters include Speed, Acceleration and Handling, and can be selected at the beginning of each solo race or Grand Prix, to give you the best possible advantage over the mixture of new and old tracks that are available.

INFORMATION

- **FEATURED SYSTEM:** 3DS
- **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A
- **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- **PRICE:** £39.99
- **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
- **DEVELOPER:** NINTENDO EAD/RETRO STUDIOS
- **PLAYERS:** 1-8

BRIEF HISTORY

» *Super Mario Kart* was first released in August 1992, and marked the first true spin-off game for *Mario*. It has gone on to spawn a total of six sequels (or eight if you include arcade games *Mario Kart Arcade GP* and *Mario Kart Arcade GP 2*).

A large number of new weapons have also been included, and range from the Super Leaf, which allows you to swipe at nearby karts with a tail for a limited amount of time, to the fire flower, which belches out large globs of dangerous flame. Best of all is the rare Lucky Seven, which simultaneously equips seven items.

Drift boosting has also been refined and is now rewarded based on the sharpness of your turn. It becomes massively important on the 150cc races, and presents a fantastic feeling of risk versus reward that previous iterations have shied away from. Coins further boost your speed, and the brilliantly designed tracks are some of the best in recent memory.

Yes, they're still as wide as ever, but the imagination that has been packed into them deserves to be commended. Clever alternate routes reward you with short-cuts, or stacks of previously hidden coins, while the ability to fly above or below tracks means you need to tackle them in a refreshing new way. The tracks are further complemented by the genuinely decent use of 3D. Far more subtle than earlier 3DS games, it's nevertheless extremely effective, making it far easier to judge depth and distance.

Mario Kart 7 is a resounding success, carefully matching the outlandish multiplayer aspects of more recent games, with the slick racing of the original. The gimmicky first-person view and motion controls are best forgotten about, but in every other respect *Mario Kart 7* is a clear winner that will delight newcomers and stalwart fans of the series.

OPINION



This is a fantastic *Mario Kart* sequel that manages to pack so much in, from new weapons and mechanics to some imaginative new tracks and customisation options. The 3D is superb too and, like *Super Mario Land 3D*, really adds to the experience. Another essential 3DS purchase.

Stuart Hunt

In a Nutshell

Effective 3D, plenty of modes and decent additions to the core gameplay all combine to make *Mario Kart 7* the best racer on 3DS. Don't miss it.

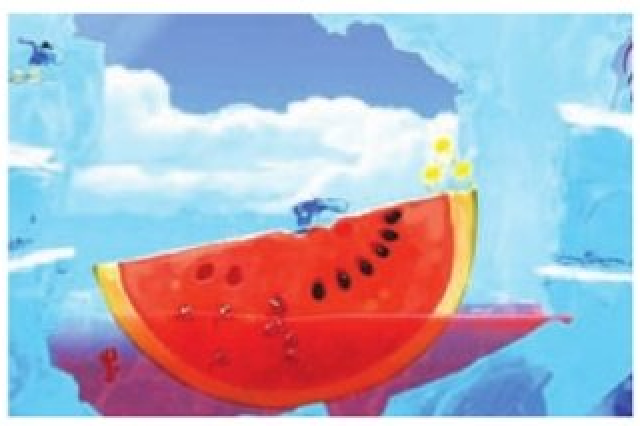
>> **Score 92%**

Rayman Origins

A CLASSIC RAY OF SUNSHINE

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** XBOX 360 » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** PS3, Wii, 3DS, PS VITA » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW » **PRICE:** £49.99 » **PUBLISHER:** UBISOFT » **DEVELOPER:** UBISOFT MONTPELLIER » **PLAYERS:** 1-4







» [X360] *Rayman Origins* looks as stunning as the original PSone game did back in 1995. This one is the better game though.



Thanks to *Super Mario Land 3D* and *Sonic Generations* it's been a great time for the platform genre of late. Now, the quality continues as Michel Ancel and his limbless creation Rayman provide the icing on that retro-flavoured cake.

The first thing that will hit you about *Origins* is how stunningly beautiful it looks. The graphics have this gorgeous daydream quality that instantly draws you into its cheerful, vibrant world, and makes *Origins* not only a joy to play but also makes time spent doing so pass in the blink of an eye.

Thanks to a perfectly pitched difficulty curve, the gameplay also feels wonderfully light and uncomplicated too – refreshingly so. And while the way in which you progress (collecting pick-ups to unlock new stages) and disparately themed worlds (lava, ice, culinary) seem unoriginal, Ubisoft's unique slant on these staple platforming stages contain so much imagination and charm, and so many smile-making moments, that it's quickly forgotten about.

Like *New Super Mario Bros. Wii*, you can progress through *Origins* solo or go it with three friends (offline only, sadly), with each player taking command of one of a large number of quirky playable characters. Unfortunately though, they're essentially palette swaps, so there's no real need to replay previous stages in a new body other than to enjoy its unique animations.

Ubisoft has served up an insanely polished and playable back-to-basics 2D platformer in *Origins*, and while it does nothing new for the platform genre, it does a masterful job in reminding us why the 2D platform game once reigned supreme.

OPINION



Yes, *Rayman Origins* is an achingly beautiful game, but it's also one that's brilliantly designed. The level structure is reminiscent of the best 16-bit platformers, and it's a credit to Michel Ancel and the rest of his talented team that it plays just as superbly as it looks.

Darran Jones

>> **Score 87%**



» [X360] With ten different modes, SNK Playmore is clearly making amends for the emaciated *KOFXII*.

The King Of Fighters XIII

RETURN OF THE KING OR RETURN TO THE SHOP?

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** XBOX 360 » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** PS3, iOS » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW » **PRICE:** £39.99 » **PUBLISHER:** RISING STAR GAMES » **DEVELOPER:** SNK PLAYMORE » **PLAYERS:** 1-2



***The King Of Fighters XII* was bitterly disappointing. The biggest criticisms we had were a) it felt lacking in fighters and modes, and b) it didn't really feel like a *KOF* game. Well thankfully, SNK Playmore has good hearing and *KOFXIII* has ironed out these issues.**



The result is a surprisingly generous package, but one that feels squarely aimed at fans, from its cheap bosses and technical gameplay to its impenetrable story that will leave the uninitiated baffled.

The new hand-drawn fighters and backdrops remain as vibrant and stunning as ever, while the combat is a case of 'out with the old and in with the older', as the simple systems of *XII* are dropped and replaced with mechanics and gauges that seem to hark back to older entries in the series.

The chief emphasis seems to rest with the new EX Moves and Drive Cancel system. The former allows fighters to perform more powerful versions of their super attacks, while the latter lets them cancel out of super attacks to chain together devastating combos. However, with access requiring timing and precision, greenhorns will find *XIII* less amenable than recent crop of Capcom brawlers.

Arcade mode is also marred slightly by each fighter having a pre-fight chinwag (as this includes mid-match), and though you can cancel their prattle it does break the flow of the game. And there's a perfectly good Story mode anyway, so it also seems even more unnecessary.

Minor grumbles aside, this is far, far slicker package than the previous game, and a must for both discerning beat-'em-up and *KOF* fans. SNK has delivered fight fans a real treat. While it doesn't have the instant accesability of say *SFIV*, invest the time in it and you'll certainly be rewarded.

OPINION



It's pleasing to see that SNK Playmore has rectified all the problems from *The King Of Fighters XII*. The animation is fluid, backgrounds are full of character, and the combat mechanics are surprisingly deep and robust. It's just a pity the online netcode isn't as smooth as I'd like.

Darran Jones

>> **Score 80%**

RETROROUND-UP

>> Every month we take a look at the latest classics that have been re-released for a new generation of gamers



DOWNLOAD OF THE MONTH

Dizzy Prince Of The Yolkfolk

INFORMATION
» **System:** iOS
» **Buy it for:** £1.49/£2.49
» **Buy it from:** iTunes
» **Score:** 72%





While *Prince Of The Yolkfolk* isn't the first *Dizzy* game we'd have chosen for a remake, it does make a certain amount of sense for an iOS release. It's fun and full of humour, doesn't take long to complete – which makes it perfect for short bursts of play – and lacks most of the dangerous jumps and traps from earlier *Dizzy* titles.

This last point is very important when you consider the new control system that *Dizzy* now utilises. The rigid layout of directional arrows makes it a little trickier to play on an iPad, and there are no alternate layouts on the version we played. It's sometimes too easy to hit the wrong virtual button, but as there are few sections that require pixel-perfect precision, it's rarely a game-breaker. Even when it threatens to ruin the fun, you now have additional control over Dizzy, enabling you change your direction in mid-air in dangerous sections. It's also nice that he gains momentum as you travel longer distances.

We really don't like how all the graphical charm of the original Amiga game has been sucked out of this port, but the new music really is excellent. Finally, the handy hints and infinite lives will ensure that everyone gets to finish *Dizzy*'s first iOS outing. Here's hoping there are more of them.

>> OTHER HIGHLIGHTS



Shinobi
» **System:** 3DS
» **Buy it for:** £39.99
» **Score:** 77%
» We're impressed with *Shinobi*, as it's a true return to the hardcore gameplay of old. There's an interesting scoring system, with points deducted when you get hit or die, clever uses of 3D, engaging boss fights, and lots of nice nods to past games in the series. It's crushingly difficult, and the bland visuals won't appeal to many, but the slick control system, sheer variety of moves and old-school appeal make it hard to resist.



BurgerTime World Tour
» **System:** Xbox 360
» **Buy it for:** 800 points (£6.40)
» **Score:** 72%
» *BurgerTime* never gets the love it deserves, so it's pleasing to see a great update on Xbox Live Arcade. The core mechanics of making burgers remains, but Pepper Pete has learned plenty of new tricks and can access various power-ups and jumps, as he makes his way through the large rotating levels in his quest to make the perfect burger. MonkeyPaw Games has taken an age-old classic and made it relevant for a brand new generation of gamers.



Worms Crazy Golf
» **System:** PS3, Xbox 360, PC
» **Buy it for:** £6.29
» **Score:** 61%
» *Crazy Golf* is so similar to the mechanics of the *Worms* franchise that we're surprised no one at Team17 thought of it earlier. Shots are pulled off in typical *Worms* style, while the pass-and-play gameplay works well. The courses aren't as well designed as we'd like, but the wacky humour and fierce competitiveness of the traditional games has been well captured. *Worms Crazy Golf* is a brave gamble, but it's a gamble that has just about paid off.



Ultimate Marvel Vs. Capcom 3
» **System:** PS3, Xbox 360
» **Buy it for:** £29.99
» **Score:** 73%
» It's a sensible price, but we still think this is the game we should have received in the first place. The new characters gel, with Strider, Phoenix Wright, Ghost Rider and Doctor Strange being the standouts. Existing characters have been tweaked and are better balanced, additional backgrounds have been included, and the combos remain as over-the-top as ever. Net play has also been greatly improved, making this the definitive version.

▾ VIRTUAL CONSOLE

With Virtual Console seemingly dead, it's down to the 3DS to deliver the goods...

Metroid II: The Return Of Samus
» **System:** Game Boy
» **Buy it for:** £3.60
» **Score:** ★★★★☆

Side Pocket
» **System:** Game Boy
» **Buy it for:** £2.70
» **Score:** ★★☆☆☆

Lock 'N Chase
» **System:** Game Boy
» **Buy it for:** £2.70
» **Score:** ★★★★☆

Catrap
» **System:** Game Boy
» **Buy it for:** £2.70
» **Score:** ★★★★☆

▾ PC SERVICES

The PC continues to deliver a large number of genuine classics. GOG in particular impresses this month thanks to high-profile EA releases.

Sacrifice
» **System:** PC
» **Buy it for:** $9.99
» **Buy it from:** www.dotemu.com
» **Score:** ★★★☆☆

Descent 2
» **System:** PC
» **Buy it for:** $9.99
» **Buy it from:** www.dotemu.com
» **Score:** ★★☆☆☆

Battle Chess
» **System:** PC
» **Buy it for:** $5.99
» **Buy it from:** www.dotemu.com
» **Score:** ★★★☆☆

Ultima 7: The Complete Edition
» **System:** PC
» **Buy it for:** $5.99 (£3.72)
» **Buy it from:** www.gog.com
» **Score:** ★★★★☆

Starflight 1+2
» **System:** PC
» **Buy it for:** $5.99 (£3.72)
» **Buy it from:** www.gog.com
» **Score:** ★★★★☆

Crusader: No Regret
» **System:** PC
» **Buy it for:** $5.99 (£3.72)
» **Buy it from:** www.gog.com
» **Score:** ★★★★☆

Lands Of Lore
» **System:** PC
» **Buy it for:** $5.99
» **Buy it from:** www.gog.com
» **Score:** ★★★★☆

▾ PSN

PSN appears to be running out of steam for the time being, too.

Space Invaders Extreme
» **System:** PSP
» **Buy it for:** £7.99
» **Score:** ★★★☆☆

Toki Tori
» **System:** PS3
» **Buy it for:** £6.29
» **Score:** ★★★☆☆

Blood Omen: Legacy Of Kain
» **System:** PSone
» **Buy it for:** £4.79
» **Score:** ★★★☆☆

Fighting Fantasy: The Warlock Of Firetop Mountain
» **System:** Minis
» **Buy it for:** £2.49
» **Score:** ★★★★☆

Dezaemon Plus
» **System:** PSone
» **Buy it for:** £3.99
» **Score:** ★★★★☆



HOMEBREW

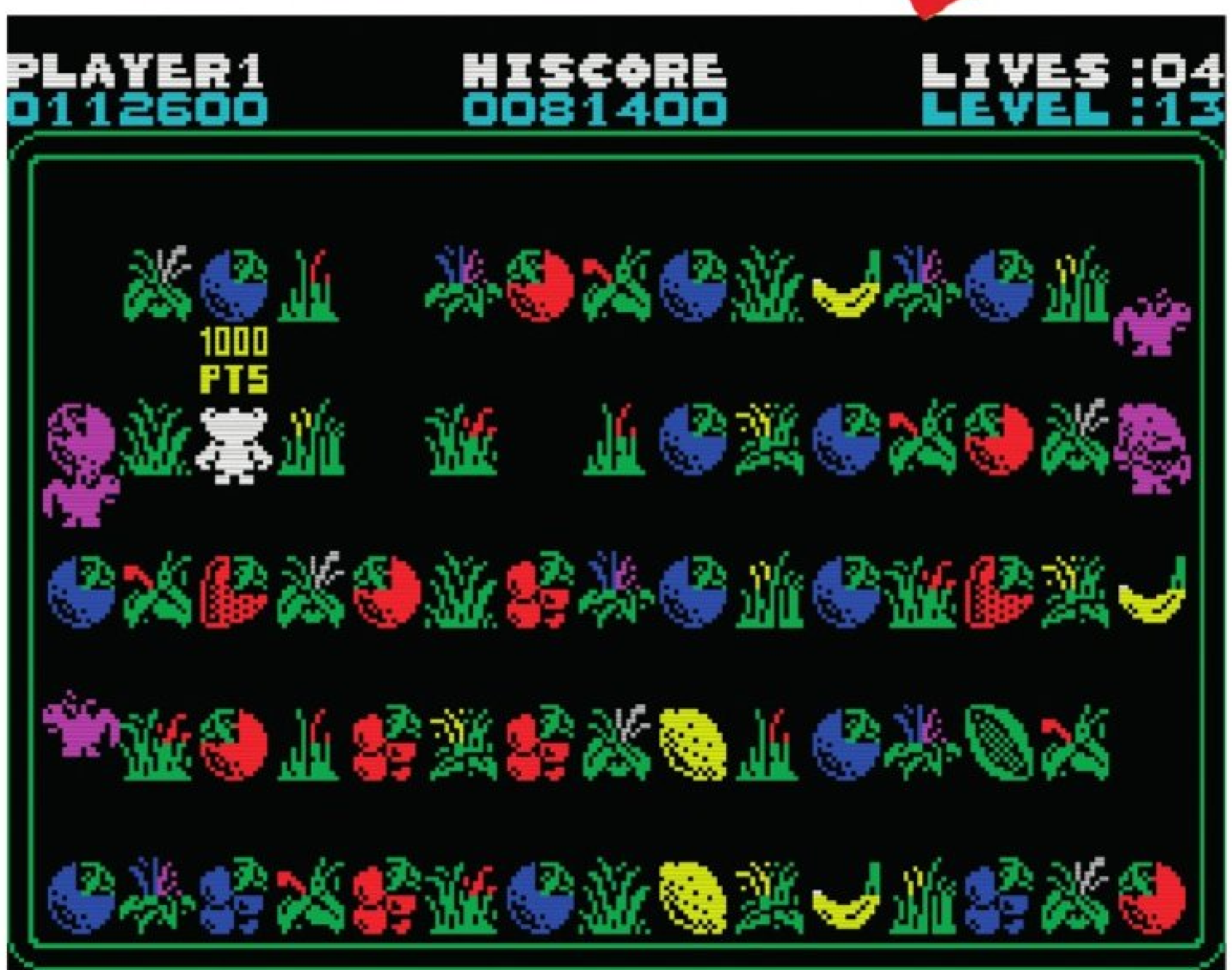
>> The scene's latest news and reviews



I'm writing this a week after Replay - from which I'm still recovering – which was a great chance to catch up with some old friends and meet people I'd previously only talked to online, with the primary topic being the games and previews being shown on the Old School Gaming stand. In fact, I barely got to see inside the main hall because that talking was far too much fun!

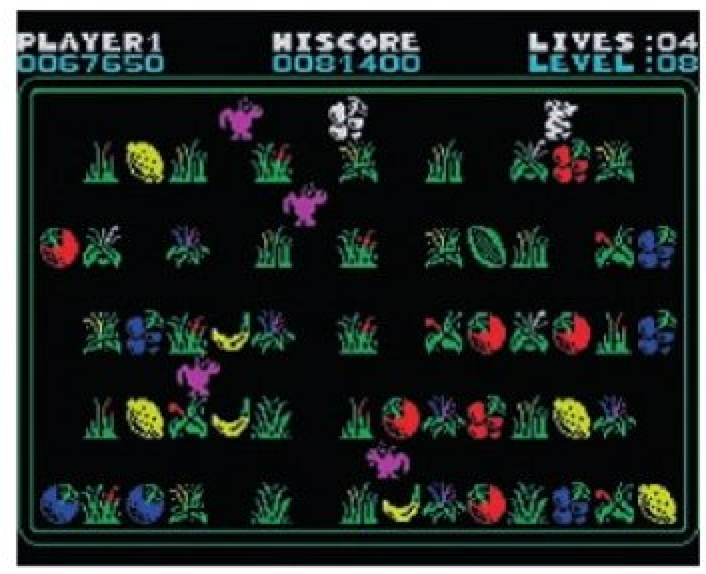
DINGO

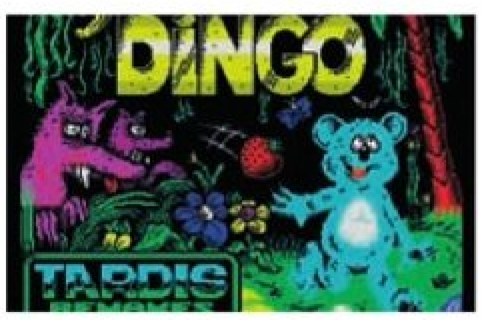
DINGO, DINGO, WHY YOU GET SO MAD?



» [Spectrum] Fall apart in my backyard.







» **FORMAT:** SPECTRUM
» **DEVELOPED BY:** TARDIS REMAKES
» **LINK:** KIKSTART.EU/DINGO
» **RELEASE DATE:** 2011
» **PRICE:** FREE

Big Ted simply adores fruit, even to the point where he'll brave fields occupied by wild dogs in order to gorge himself on nature's bounty. And the dingoes he's sharing those tasty treats with are absolutely livid at the thought of him nicking their nourishment, which means that, along with wanting to tear our poor hero limb from limb, they're not averse to assaulting him with large pieces of fruit either! So it's fortunate for Teddy that his last collected item can similarly be used as a weapon, either to stun an advancing dingo or to knock out an incoming projectile.

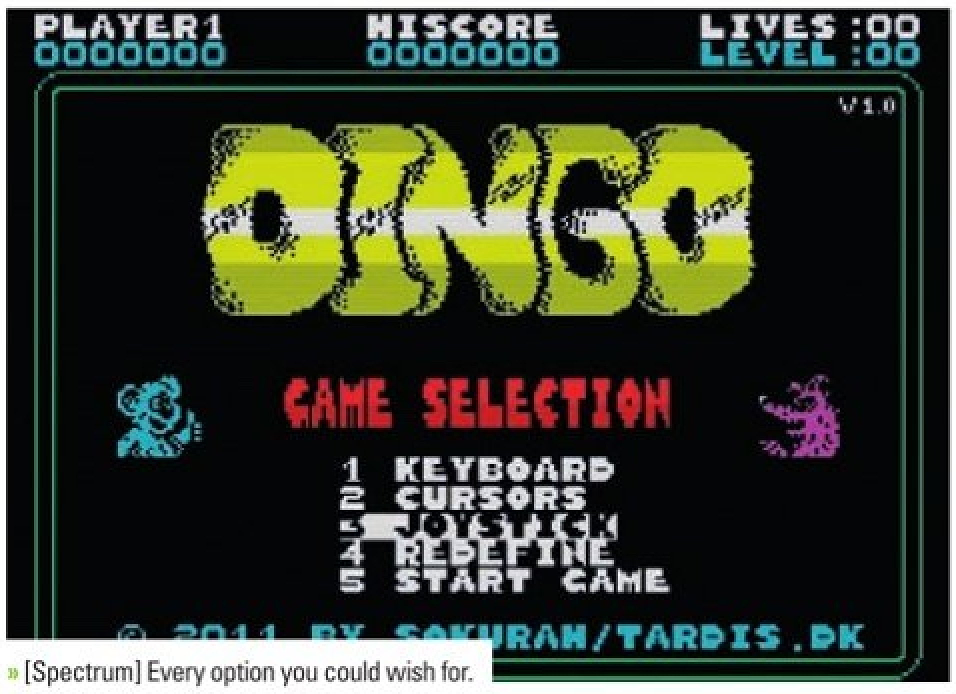
Each fruit is worth a different score, with cherries being a mere 50 points compared to the 400 gained for gobbling up a blackcurrant, and there are extra bonuses to be had – if Edward collects three in a row of the fruit specified at the start of a stage, he'll be handed an extra 1,000 points along with their worth.

Developers Soren 'Sokurah' Borgquist and Mark R Jones have managed to produce a game that could easily conceal itself within a crowd of early Ultimate releases. The graphics are well-defined and colourful, the beeper-powered music and sound effects work a treat, and there are neat cosmetic details like the arcade-style attract mode with scoring information and even the little dingo victory dance when the player is flattened. Most important of all, the gameplay feels how an early Eighties arcade game should: fast-paced and challenging action but fair with it – pretty much what gamers would have expected had Ultimate itself converted the game from its original coin-op to the Spectrum. There might only be the one screen layout to deal with, but that's part of the game's charm, and the difficulty comes from the increasing aggressiveness of the dingoes rather than convoluted mazes.

One point of interest is the control system; Ted's collision detection is rather precise, so lining up for a corner in the play area can prove tricky since there's no automatic cornering to nudge him onto the right line. This doesn't detract from the game at all but does take a little getting used to initially, and the most comfortable technique we've found for navigating safely is to hold the joystick at a diagonal while approaching a corner, Ted does all the work, changing direction when he reaches the correct position.

Visitors to Replay may well have seen *Dingo* running on both the Attic Bug and Old School Gaming stands during the event, with both Spectrums seeing quite a bit of play from event goers during the course of those two days, and it isn't hard to understand that attention after playing a few goes. And as one final bonus for those who enjoy their games on real cassettes, the World of Spectrum page for *Dingo* has the cassette inlay artwork designed by Mark R Jones to download, print and fold!

91%



» [Spectrum] Every option you could wish for.



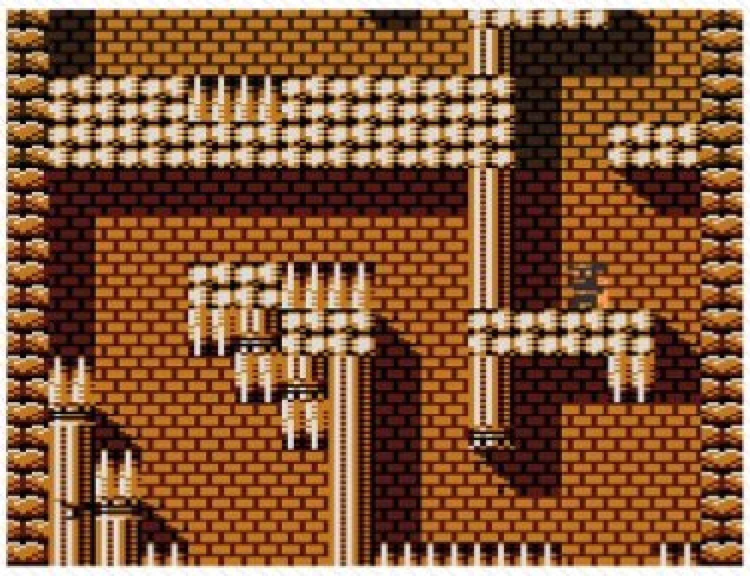
» [Spectrum] Don't pick the prickly pear by the paw.

NEW GAMES NEEDED

If you have a homebrew project you would like to see featured then please contact us at:
retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk

MIGHTY JILL OFF

» **FORMAT:** SPECTRUM » **DEVELOPER:** MORONS OF HAR » **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/MIGHTY-JILL » **PRICE:** FREE



» [Atari 8-bit] Just past a very nasty section.

After upsetting her queen merely by being too eager to serve, poor Jill finds herself cast into the tower and tasked with defending it. That means making her way through the defences to the top without puncturing her outfit, and that's not going to be easy.

Fortunately, Jill went to the *Mighty Bomb Jack* school of jumping and has some skills that will come in handy: pressing fire launches her gracefully into the air, a second press will 'break' the jump so she stops moving upwards and begins to fall, and rapidly prodding the fire button at this point allows her to glide.

Designed by indie developer Anna Anthropy, the original *Mighty Jill Off* was an exploration of sadism and was deliberately meant to be hard, but this version seems to be harder still. Disciplined players may well succeed, but the strict collisions mean that many will be beaten into submission.

73%

OUT-SPACE

» **FORMAT:** C64 » **DEVELOPER:** JASON TINKLER
» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/OUT-SPACE » **PRICE:** FREE

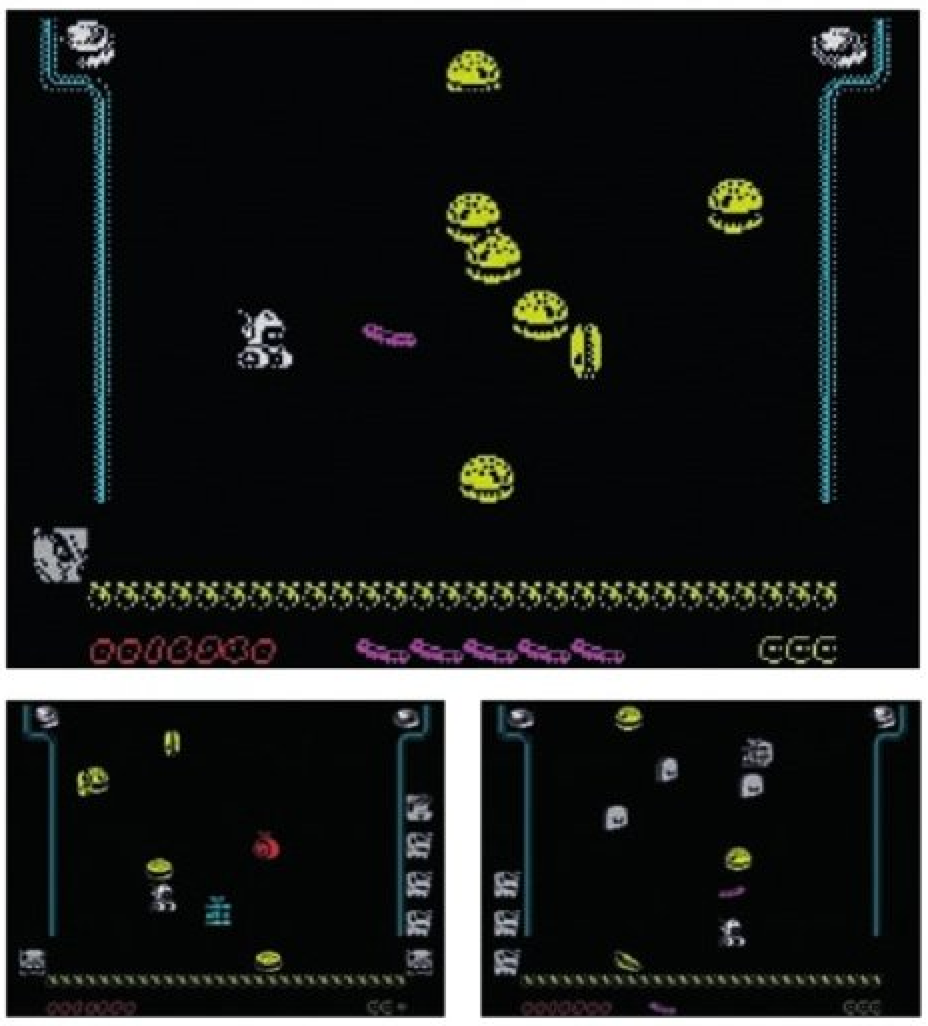
Originally written over two months in 1993 by Jason Tinkler and resurrected for this year's Replay, *Out-Space* is something of an homage to coin-op classics such as *Galaxian*, *Phoenix* and *Moon Cresta*, with just a sprinkling of Jeff Minter-style madness. The player's ship sits at the bottom of the screen with its gun aimed upwards, while a motley collection of attackers including candles, houses, fish and more conventional alien invaders weave around the screen and return fire.

Out-Space is a pretty tough game. Each wave has a quota that must be eradicated before moving on, and there's not a pause for breath between them either. There are a couple of frustrating moments, but the playability of the levels will outweigh that for anybody who enjoys a spot of abstract destruction – and it's well worth giving the 'game over' tune a listen at some point.

84%

» [C64] Blasting by candle light.





» [Spectrum] Mmm… beefy!

BYTE ME

» **FORMAT:** SPECTRUM » **DEVELOPER:** JONATHAN CAULDWELL
» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/BYTE-ME » **PRICE:** FREE

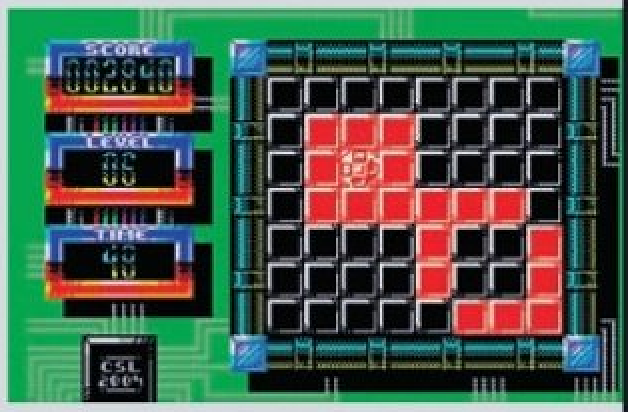
Jonathan Cauldwell's *Byte Me* is the first release from the *Eventureland* series, a group of games being developed over a number of 8-bit platforms that loosely re-create specific moments from recent retro gaming events; this one is about Byte Back in 2009 and in particular the food. A cute little robot has been left in charge of the besieged canteen and, while the customers are waiting for their burgers and hot dogs, the buns are running around on their own.

Shooting a bread product with the appropriate meaty filling causes it to drop onto a conveyor belt controlled by the large buttons in the top corners of the play area, which is used to whisk it off to a hungry event goer. Juggling attention between collecting ammunition, assembling food, operating the conveyor and generally staying alive takes concentration but can prove remarkably satisfying – probably more so than the food did!

83%

WHAT'S BREWING?

All the latest news from the homebrew community



» [Spectrum] Half a decade in the making…

>> Delayed Reaxion

One of the nearly complete games on show at this year's Replay was the long-awaited Spectrum conversion of C64 action puzzle game *Reaxion*. The game itself is a *Lights Out*-style puzzle where all of the cells of the 99 playfields must be set to a specific colour. Although we don't know a final release date yet, it's worth keeping an eye on the Cosine website at **cosine.org.uk** for the latest info.



» [Atom] The aliens should turn up sooner or later.

>> To infinity and beyond

Another work-in-progress game on show at Replay was Kees van Oss's *Atomic Galaforce* for the Acorn Atom. Based on the original source code for the BBC Micro title *Galaforce*, this fast-moving blaster is shaping up nicely, and we shouldn't be waiting too long for a release. Have a look at **kikstart.eu/atomic-galaforce** for the Retro Software page, which has some more screenshots and a video of the game.



» [Atari 8-bit] Ribbit, ribbit!

>> That's just silly!

The Silly Venture 2011 party usually results in a couple of new Atari 8-bit games, and this year was no exception, including single-screen action game *Frogs*, *Addams Family*-inspired *Fester's Quest* and a conversion of Game & Watch title *Parachute*. At the time of writing, *Iso Hunters* isn't available but should be out soon. A download including almost everything released is hiding behind **kikstart.eu/sv2011-programs**

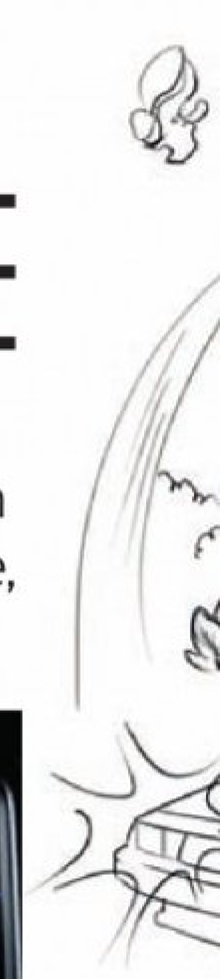


WHAT IS RETRO CITY RAMPAGE?

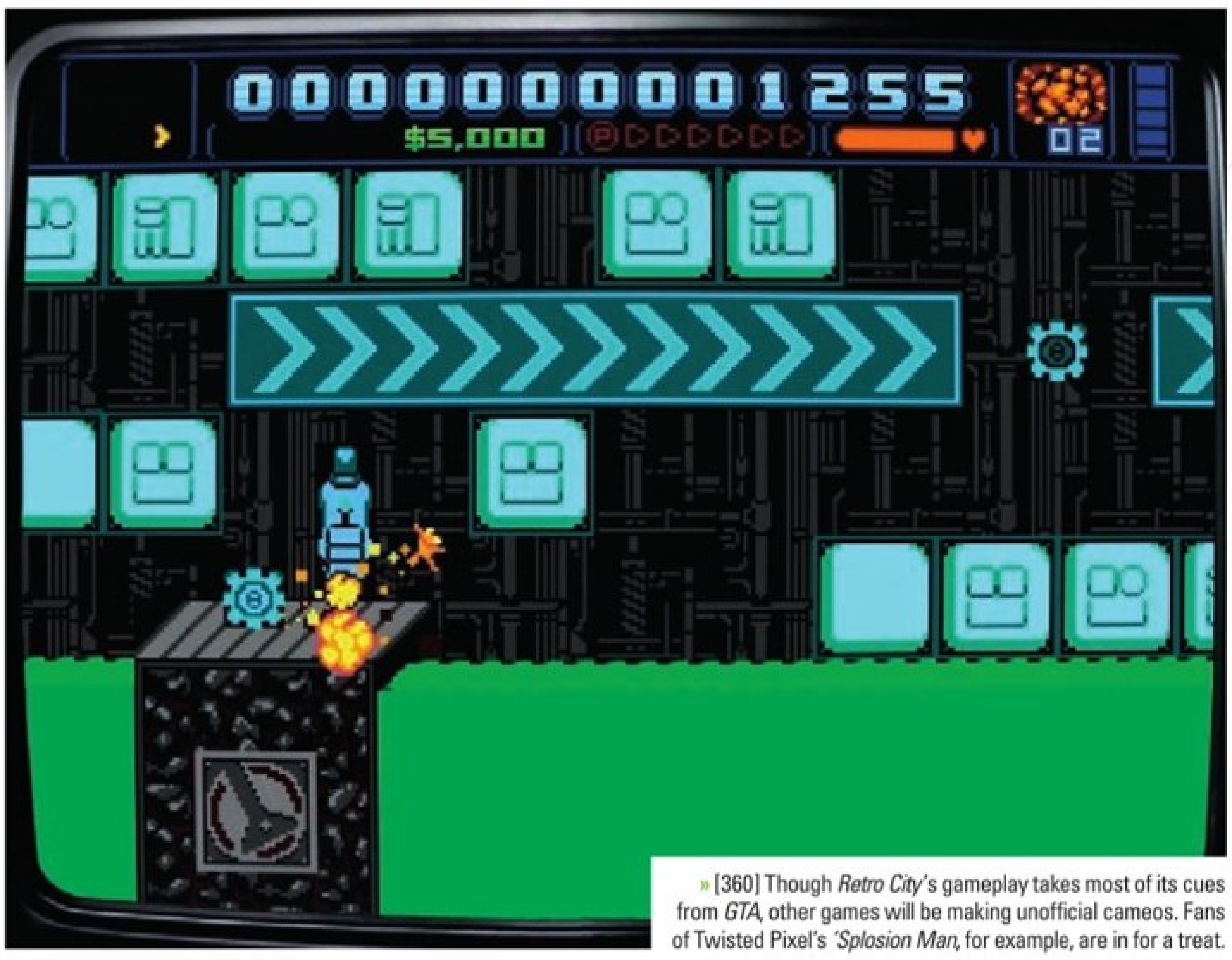
Retro City Rampage started as an ambitious pet project to bring an authentic GTA experience to the NES. When technical constraints prevented it from being as good as it could be, it evolved into Retro City Rampage and moved away from its demake origins to become a celebration of classic gaming and pop culture

THE MAKING OF RETRO CITY RAMPAGE

We speak to the coders behind remakes of classic games and retro-inspired indie titles, and find out what drives them to complete them. This month we caught up with Brian Provinciano and chatted to him about his forthcoming XBLA and WiiWare game, Retro City Rampage – a colourful, action-packed ode to GTA and classic gaming



Retro Gamer: It's obvious that you're a clear fan of the *GTA* series and the NES, but what is it about the series and the console that appeals to you most?
Brian Provinciano: I was a huge gamer during the 8- and 16-bit era and a huge fan of the *GTA* games since the beginning. As soon as I stumbled upon the original *GTA* games in the late Nineties, I was instantly hooked. I played *GTA2* every day for at least a year straight and I was so blown away with *GTA III* that I bought a PS2 just to play it. I'm sure nostalgia plays a big part in it, but I really love the pick-up-and-play design and simplicity of them both. I never feel like I have time to invest into a 40- or 80-hour game. That in itself has influenced *RCR* a lot because, although it has hours upon hours of gameplay, I've worked hard to ensure it still feels like a pick-up-and-play game.



» [360] Though *Retro City*'s gameplay takes most of its cues from *GTA*, other games will be making unofficial cameos. Fans of Twisted Pixel's *'Splosion Man*, for example, are in for a treat.

RG: *Retro City Rampage* started life as an ambitious project to get a *GTA*-style game running on the NES. Can you tell us more about its origin?
BP: Whenever I play a game I like, I get inspired to make my own version of it, and during the pinnacle of my fandom for *GTA* that was the game I was most compelled to make. Simultaneously, as a programmer I was really intrigued by the challenge of developing a NES game, having to tackle the limitations of the 1.78MHz system. It made sense to combine the two challenges! Before starting what you see today as *Retro City Rampage*, the initial goal was to build an unofficial demake of *GTA III* on the original NES hardware. There had been 8-bit Game Boy versions of *GTA* before, but this was going to be more ambitious. More story, a more detailed city, livelier. I also ambitiously wanted to create the largest NES game in history.

> **"I was intrigued by the challenge of developing a NES game, tackling the limitations of the system"**



RG: Why did you choose Portland from *GTA III* as the basis for your game?
BP: *GTA III* had a greater story than the originals and I wanted to re-create every detail possible on the NES. I did, however, decide to re-create only the first island after realising how time-consuming it was to draw, let alone scripting all of the missions. Time aside, it was one of the most enjoyable parts of development. I also learned a lot. So when it came time to create the *Retro City Rampage* city I built a world editor tool, something that enabled me to create an even more detailed city and easily adjust it as gameplay required.

RG: How did you go about planning the layout and look of the city?
BP: I actually loosely based it on compressed street layout of the city I live in, Vancouver. It's changed a lot since but some key places are still in their relative locations. For example, one of the main streets was under construction at the time, so the game reflects this! There's even a building near the water where EA Black Box used to be, which was unfortunately closed, so *RCR* reflects this too in a tongue-in-cheek way. The game's full of hundreds of these types of things. One location is even used for a mission





» [360] As well as videogames, *Retro City Rampage*'s missions will parody a number of popular films and television shows.



» Here is a selection of the cool *Retro City Rampage* goodies that Brian gave away to attendees at PAX earlier this year.

poking fun at the Vancouver 2010 Olympics, so *RCR* isn't even limited to videogame or pop-culture references.

RG: How did *Grand Theftendo* then evolve into *Retro City Rampage*?
BP: The NES is a very limited platform. If you remember the sprite flickering on some games, it's because the system couldn't display very many. The limited memory also reduced the number of unique vehicles, even with additional cartridge hardware like the MMC5 chip. I was pleased with what I had built and it was cool to see a caricature of *GTA III*, but my focus began to shift. I became less excited by the technical achievement of playing a watered-down 8-bit version of *GTA* running on the hardware and more excited to create something that was just incredibly fun to play.

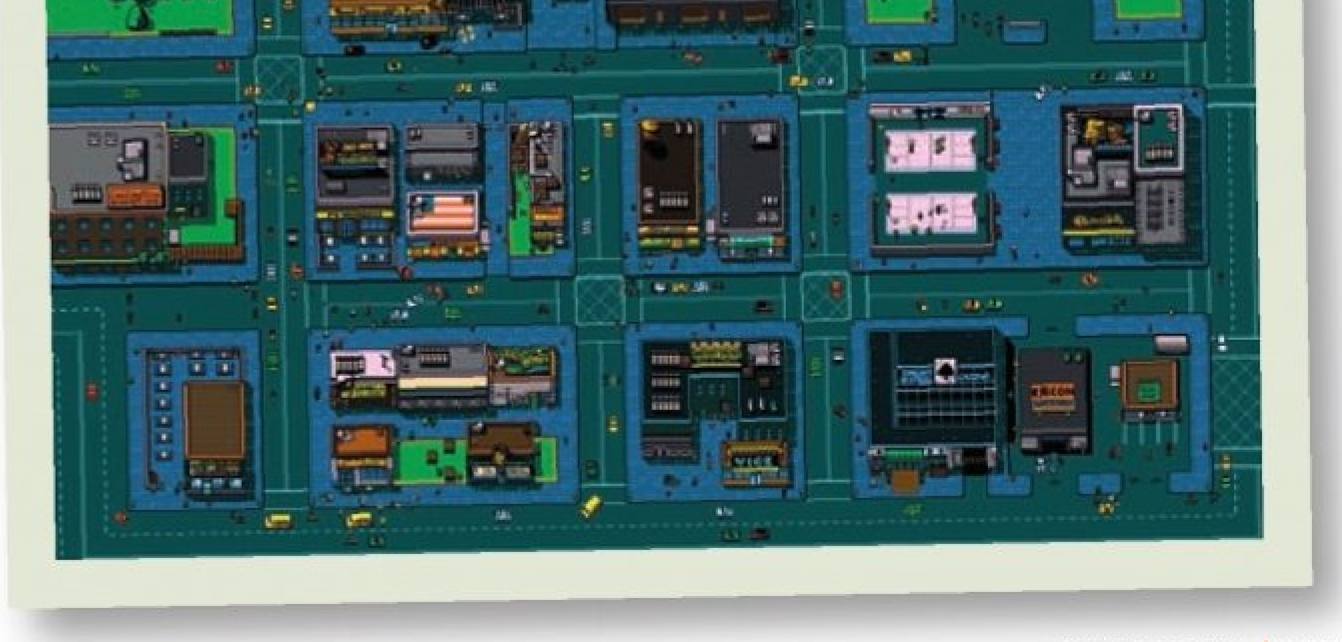
RG: How do the two games differ?
BP: Not only is the theme of *Retro City Rampage* the polar opposite with its over-the-top cartoon style, but it's also immensely more detailed in every way, from objects to abilities, weapons, mechanics and interactions. The missions span almost every genre and it's full of story and cut-scenes, leaderboard challenges, video replays, awards, stats – the list goes on. It's the 8-bit open-world crime game I dreamt of making, finally realised.

RG: How many people do you have working on the project?
BP: I've got an additional part-time artist and three audio composers, but otherwise it's all me. That's why it's taken so long to develop, because I did everything from scratch. From the tools and engine, to the design, writing, much of the art, even the business, paperwork, trailers, marketing, trade shows and events.

RG: In terms of gameplay and missions, what can *GTA* fans expect?
BP: *Retro City Rampage* has everything a *GTA* fan would want. A full open world to explore where you can head to missions or find arcade challenges where you're just running around, causing destruction. The city is full of buildings to explore and things to do, from going to the bar for a pint of 'milk' or playing casino and arcade games to getting your hair cut or buying hats, driving a taxi, launching cars into the water or collecting hidden packages. It's packed with content. Where it differs is that the missions extend far beyond your standard driving and shooting; they hit nearly every genre out there. From stealth to side-scrolling, rhythm-action, adventure, even ones that play like Eighties coin-ops. I also avoid as much grinding and repetitive tasks as possible, so every arcade challenge and previously completed mission can be started directly from the main menu, and missions are littered with checkpoints. However, fans of *GTA* games can still wander the city to find arcade challenges if they so choose.

RG: Do you have any plans to release a map/mission editor for the game?
BP: No plans for these at the moment, but it would be exciting to see. Hopefully modders can build them for me! [laughs]

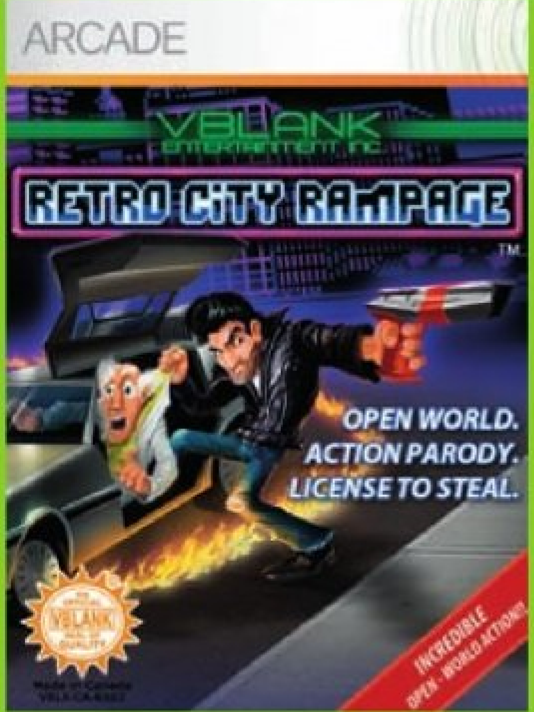
RG: Finally, has Rockstar Games been in touch? If so, what's been its reaction to the project?
BP: Rockstar's great. They congratulated me on the [Independent Games Festival] nomination, which meant a lot to me. I sent a bunch of them home from the last Game Developers Conference with a bunch of *Retro City Rampage* posters and will be happy to send them free copies of the game when it's released.



RIVER CITY LAMPOON

In addition to the crime, the gunfights and addictive car-jacking of the *GTA* franchise, the streets and missions of *Retro City Rampage* are littered with references to a whole host of films and other gaming franchises, from *Back To The Future* to *River City Ransom*. In fact, it becomes clear that nostalgia will play a part in every fibre of the game, as Brian tells us about some of the weapons and powers that will feature: "You can jump on pedestrians for coins and points like how Mario stomps on Goombas; collect power-ups; wield weapons like a bionic arm, a lightgun and something a lot like a *Ghostbusters* proton pack. It's a crazy mash-up of send-ups from the entire history of gaming and pop culture, and it's guaranteed to make you laugh while you're having fun."

***Retro City Rampage* is currently slated for a February 2012 release on WiiWare and Xbox Live Arcade**



MAILBAG

HAVE YOUR SAY… SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – **WWW.RETROGAMER.NET**

STAR LETTER

SUPER MARIO WALL

Dear Retro Gamer,

Hello, I would first like to say keep up the great work on the magazine – big fan all the way from Perth, Western Australia. After reading your magazine, filled with creative designs and layouts, I was inspired to turn my son's bedroom into a full-size scene from *Super Mario Bros*. It was all hand drawn and painted by myself, and I added a few floating shelves above the brick platforms to make them a bit more useful. Now he has never been happier to go to sleep!

I have attached a couple of photos to share with your readers if you wish.

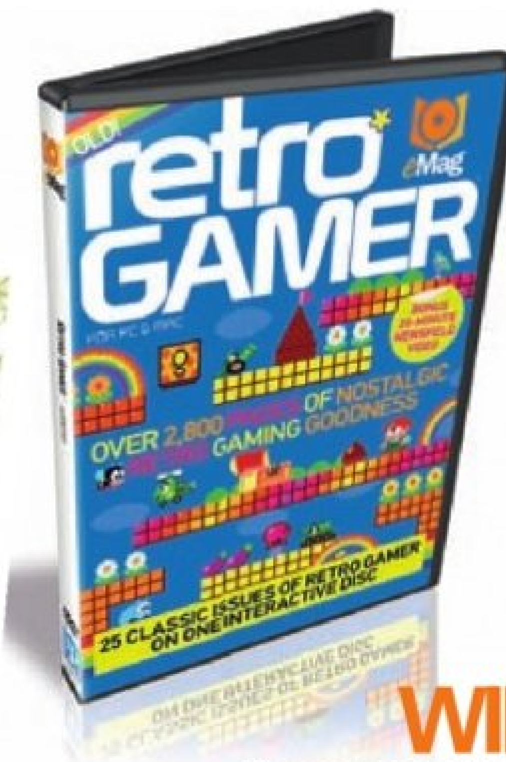
Cheers,

Mathew Jakovich

Good work on the bedroom, Mathew. It looks absolutely fantastic, and we can understand why your son loves it so much. Stuart likes how you've cleverly integrated the shelves into the picture – although we can't recommend hitting them from below – while Darran is now looking at the plain walls of the office with a rather worrying glint in his eye…







WIN!

Every month, one lucky reader will receive a copy of our latest eMag, **Retro Gamer Load 3**, a bargain if ever there was one. All you have to do is present a lucid, thought-provoking piece of literature that melts our souls. Failing that, something funny with swear words, or something *Strider*-related will go down just as well…

ROCKFORD LOVES YOU

Hello Darran,

It's been a while since First Star Software were featured in issues 69 and 74, and I just wanted to touch base before the new year to tell you how great it was to see *Boulder Dash* voted #23 in the top 25 Commodore 64 games of all time by your readers! It's always great to see Rockford gracing the pages of **Retro Gamer**.

Richard M Spitainy

Glad to hear that you enjoyed the feature, Richard. We've actually had a surprising amount of feedback from the article, both good and bad. In fact, you can read some of the responses below…



» [C64] Look for an interview with Richard M Spitainy in a future issue.

PARADROID SCORES

Dear Retro Gamer,

I just wanted to say how much I enjoyed the top 25 Commodore 64 games in issue 96 of **Retro Gamer**. I'm especially pleased with the list, because you voted my favourite game of all time in the number one spot. Even today, I play *Paradroid* as often as possible, because it's unmatched by any other game. Part shooter, part puzzler, it's an amazing piece of software that proves just how imaginative games could be on Commodore's machine if a little thought was put into them.

It was also interesting to see *Wizball* chart so highly, because it's another great example of innovative design. In fact, the only thing that could have made the article better is if you had interviews with all the developers in question. That would have made my day.

Chris James



» [C64] There were literally just a few points separating *Paradroid* and *Wizball*.

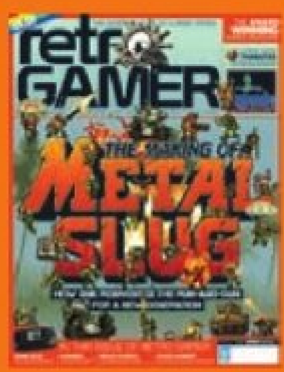
Glad to hear you enjoyed the list, although we can't take all the credit for it. Numerous readers took part, and it's thanks to their votes and enjoyable anecdotes that the article became such a joy to write.

RETURN OF THE MATT

Dear idiots,

Having abandoned **Retro Gamer** due to its lacklustre content, I was outraged to see the face of an instantly forgettable *Final Fantasy* character staring back at me as I passed your magazine in WHSmiths.

Wondering what possible reason there could be for featuring a non-retro game on your cover, I gleefully dived in, expecting to find justification for my decision to no longer read the magazine. I was not disappointed.



CONTACT US

Snail Mail: Retro Gamer, Imagine Publishing, Richmond House, 33 Richmond Hill, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH2 6EZ

Email: retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk



>> YOUTUBE UPDATE

DARRAN LIKES COLLECTING things. His latest passion is board games, but not crusty old *Monopoly* and *Trivial Pursuit*. He's got a new channel called GamingunpluggedUK that's totally dedicated to all things cardboard. There's still plenty of retro awesomeness at the usual address.

Final Fantasy VII will never be retro, no matter how much you shout otherwise. No one cares about the PlayStation, so you're doing your readers a disservice by even wasting pages on it. The same can be said for *Radiant Silvergun*. Now it's out on Xbox Live, everyone can see it's overrated, so you're going to have to find something else to mindlessly gush about.

Panzer Dragoon Orta had me rolling my eyes in frustration, while the article on *Dino Crisis* was as welcome as a trip to the dentist. Even the 'proper' retro articles were disappointing. No one cares about Jetman; Miner Willy would have been a far more interesting character to talk about. The *Monty Mole* article was also a wasted opportunity, as the massively underrated *Impossamole* was barely mentioned. By far the worst article, though, was the disappointing C64 piece, which included garbage such as *Wizball*, *Last Ninja* and *Impossible Mission* at the expense of *Manic Miner* and *The Great Giana Sisters*.

I will now have to buy **Retro Gamer** 97, as you clearly can't be trusted to make a magazine without my useful feedback.

Matthew Lightbourne

Don't hold back, Mr Lightbourne. As we've pointed out many times in the past, both to you and other readers, 'retro' means different things to different people. We were incredibly pleased with both the mix and quality of issue 96's content, but we obviously can't please everybody all the time. We're assuming this is one of those trolling letters that are so popular on the internet, as what other reason could you have for recommending *Impossamole* over any other game in the franchise?

NAME THAT GAME

Hi folks,

I'm trying to remember the name of a PC game I played in the mid to late Nineties, probably on Windows 95. I'm almost certain it was from a first-person perspective and the lead character had ginger hair and baggy jeans with perhaps a pet dog. If memory serves me right, the opening level was set in his apartment and the mission was to escape it via various clues; one clue may have involved an answering machine. I think it was set during night time, too, if that helps. All of the above details are sketchy and may not be completely correct because it was a long time ago and I hardly played it.

I know it's a shot in the dark, but if anyone can help I'd love you to email me back, as it's been bugging me for ages now.

Keith

Sorry, Keith, but we're drawing a real blank on this one. The first thing we thought of was *Silent Hill 4: The Room*. We soon crossed this off, though, when we realised that it doesn't have a dog, the main character doesn't have ginger hair, and it was released in 2004. Maybe one of our readers will know the game you mean, so we're putting your question out there for the world.

BACK AWAY SLOWLY

Dear Retro Gamer,

Ahh, damn and blast. I just finished reading the feature on *Bubble Bobble* and I always

> "You clearly can't be trusted to make a magazine without my useful feedback"

RETROBATE PROFILE



Name:	Jack Poole-Fuste
Joined:	20 April 2011
Location:	Mallaig
Occupation:	Student
Website:	Not given
Fave Games System:	GameCube and PlayStation



>> **[PS2] This does look like a dog, but a dog with its skin turned inside out. Probably not what Keith was looking for.**

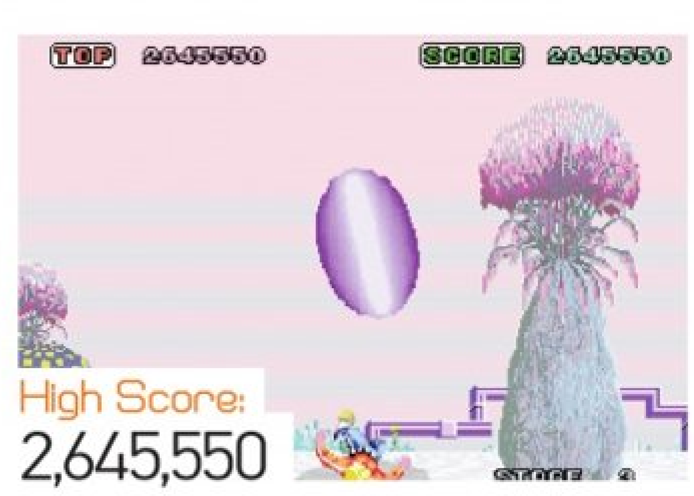
* BEAT THE TEAM

Think you're good at retro games? See if you can beat the staff at some of their favourite titles



SPACE HARRIER

This month we'd like all our readers to take part and play Sega's arcade classic *Space Harrier*. Email us your high score with a photo or screenshot for proof and the winner will be highlighted next issue. If you need some hints, simply look to the right.



High Score: 2,645,550



High Score: 1,577,600



DARRAN'S SPACE HARRIER TIPS

The main thing to remember about *Space Harrier* is that enemies always fire at your last known position. Therefore you should always keep on the move. I like to remind myself of this by saying, "Just keep moving" over and over in my head while I play.



STUART'S SPACE HARRIER TIPS

Be careful when your Harrier is on or hovering just above the ground. It's the best place to rack up points, but it's the most chaotic and dangerous section of the screen. Oh, and don't forget Yu Suzuki's revelation that it's impossible to hit enemies far off in the distance.

From the forum

» To have your say visit www.retrogamer.net/forum

Every month, Retro Gamer asks a question on the forum and prints the best replies. This month we wanted to know…

What's your favourite Rainbird release?

Bub&Bob All the Commodore 64 graphic adventures were amazing but my favourite was *The Guild Of Thieves*.

jdanddiet Starglider One reporting in.

joefish *The Advanced OCP Art Studio*. Rainbird had some good early solid-world 3D games like *Midwinter* and *Starglider 2*. A little ahead of their time, perhaps, as looking back now highlights the slow frame rates we took as normal back then. But the biggest impact on me and my Atari ST was *The Advanced OCP Art Studio*. For full-screen editing you had a choice of good packages, but for designing 2D sprites and animations nothing else came close to its zoom mode and range of handy tools.

Gibberish Driftwood *Fish!* A text adventure where the main character is a fish… who is also a secret agent. Weird plot, eh?

ncf1 *The Pawn*. I used to look at screenshots of it and drool. Finally got it and played it, and I drooled some more.

necronom I liked *Midwinter* and *Starglider*, but I'll go for *Carrier Command*. I bought that one at one of the PCW shows in London, and I played it a lot, though I wasn't very good at it.

pantal00ns *Carrier Command* for me; it just seemed so expansive. The setting was also great, with an enemy carrier to contend with and islands to capture. Never completed it, though. A do-or-die *Top Gun* approach was never very effective.

felicemaggie I would have to say *Starglider* on the ST, though to be honest they released some of the best software ever written for the ST market.

fredghostmaster *Knight Orc* on the Spectrum was a fantastic game. I must play it through again one day soon.

ipmarks Definitely *The Pawn*. I remember the sheer envy I felt seeing that game running on an Atari ST; the graphics were just beautiful. It was pretty much when I knew the Spectrum's days were numbered.

kelp7 My favourite was *Starglider* on my Amstrad PC1512. It was amazing how those vector worlds could immerse you. I could take out that first Starglider within about the first five minutes of play – come out of the silo and slam straight into it with a guided missile. Excellent game.

Smurph *Carrier Command* by default, as it was the only game of theirs that I played.

BennyTheGreek Looking at the list at World of Spectrum, I would have to say the *Art Studio*…

markopoloman Andrew Braybrook's *Morpheus*. I remember reading the diary in *Zzap!64* and I waited patiently for the review and release. Initially it was a damn confusing game, but after reading the instructions – something a bloke should never admit to doing – I actually fell in love with it. The only Braybrook game better than this was *Paradroid*.

sirclive1 *Starglider* 128K on the Spectrum was just amazing. A really cool package; the graphics are so smooth, and it featured the best speech on any Speccy game that I can remember.

Kai Hmmm. Either *Starglider 2* or *Midwinter II*, or *The Pawn*. All really great games. I'll opt for *Midwinter II*: great mixture of strategy, action and adventure!

Seadog74 Plenty of choices. *Starglider 2* on the Amiga. An atmospheric 3D shooter with some strategy.

NorthWay All the Magnetic Scrolls adventures equally, with *The Pawn* most equal, just for being first. I like *The Guild Of Thieves* the most.

thevulture *Starglider 2* ST/Amiga. Gob was well and truly smacked first time I saw it running. Pity your ship lasers fired too damn slow, though…

deadpan666 *Weird Dreams*. I was fascinated by it when I saw it on ITV's Saturday morning kids' show *Motormouth*, and jealous of all my 16-bit-owning friends when it was released. Having finally played it recently, I'm slightly disappointed… but it's still the only Rainbird game I can remember playing, and so by default it's my favourite!

AmigaJay *Weird Dreams* was so off the wall! It's not my favourite Rainbird game, but it deserves a mention! My favourite has to be *Midwinter II* on the Amiga – such a classic!

YOUR OPINION PLEASE

KILLER INSTINCT

Combo-Breaker Is anyone on here a die-hard fan of the game? I was just watching a few videos on YouTube and it reminded me of just how damn good this game was at the time!

van I only played *KI* and I was dominant. The only fighting game that nobody stood a chance.

Black Ridge Recently got *Gold* on the N64. Definitely looks and feels better than a lot of fighters out there. Would love to see what they could do with the series now that the fighting genre is booming again.

OldSkoolCoolFool The memory test is actually a fair comment but for all its faults it's still a far, far better game than *Mortal Kombat*. I don't think there have been any fighters with such cheap bastard computer AI as the first three *Mortal Kombat* games.

DO YOU LIKE MYST?

Steve82 Are you a fan of the *Myst* games? Never liked them myself.

1980-20.. I played the original on Saturn and the third one on Xbox and loved them both! I've got them all on Steam but haven't found the time to play through them.

theantmeister Yup, it was incredible to look at, but I have no idea how anyone figured out what to do. I certainly couldn't figure it out.

necronom Yep, played it on the Amiga. I really liked it. I loved the ideas in it and the story so much that I bought the three novels afterwards.

ShadowNeku I remember playing it very briefly on the *Help* charity compilation about ten years ago. As a youngster I found adventure games massively boring, and unless I was killing stuff I wasn't interested, so I didn't stick with it long. I may give it another chance some day, as I'm quite into the genre now.

ANNOYING ENEMIES

thebear Not necessarily the toughest, just the most annoying! For me it has to be the Cliff Racers from *Morrowind*. No matter how high level you were, no matter if you could kill them with one blow, these bloody things just would not leave you alone.

ulala The vampire thingy in *Rainbow Islands*.

IronMaidenRule Headcrabs from *Half-Life*. Okay on their own, but bloody annoying when there is a big mass of them coming at you.

Alarm The frogs in the later stages of *Magician Lord*. If you die and lose your power-ups, it is pretty challenging to dodge them or kill them before they transform into the big killer frogs. I could 1CC most coin-ops I persevered with back in the day, but never did 1CC this.

OLD vs NEW

Each month, we'll be finding out if the classics are better than their successors. This month, which *Mario* game is the best?

Super Mario 64



Super Mario 3D Land



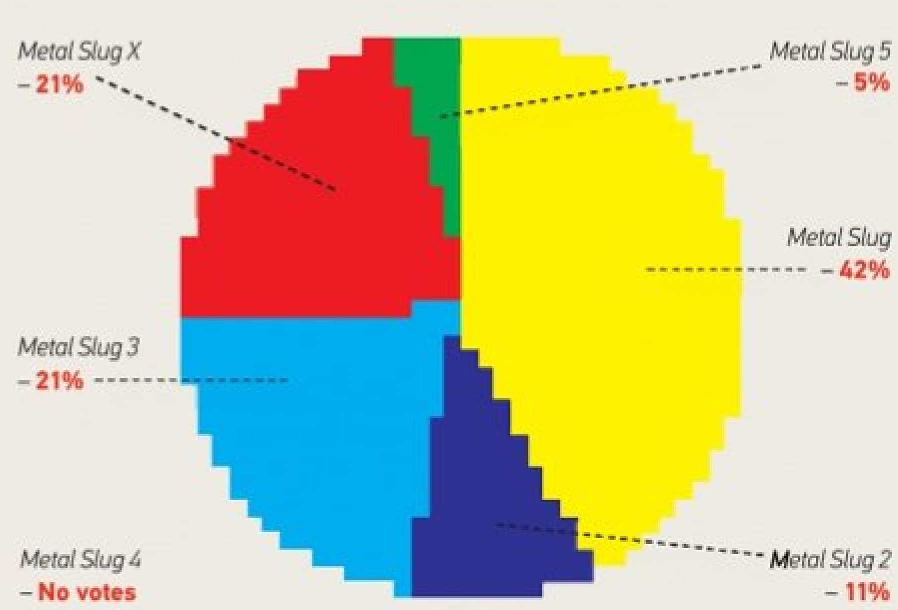
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ipmarks Nothing can ever match the sheer wonder of seeing that game run for the first time

Jagfest_UK I can't choose. They are both terrible

HOT TOPIC

Best arcade Metal Slug?



"*Metal Slug 3* for me. Just felt as if the developer was getting into its stride with amazing ideas. It just all worked. Hasn't been a better *Slug* since…"
– AmigaJay

"Jeez, that's a hard one; they're all great. Probably the first and original *Metal Slug* – beautiful to look at as you blow stuff up!"
– Greyfox

thought I'd decoded the secret message found in room 20 and that it read: "IF YOU WANT TO BEFRIEND THE OLD LIZARD, USE THE PLOUGH IN YOUR FRIDGE, AND DESIRE FOR VIOLENT WINDS!"

I thought it simply must be correct; I just figured it was some kind of cryptic Engrish that fitted right in with the rest of the game! Imagine my surprise when I told my wife about it and she replied that I was a total idiot and that she wouldn't be cooking me dinner that night or indeed ever again, as she was setting off to the Bahamas and leaving for good! Luckily, I saw the funny side of things and have since become an unemployable alcoholic, but it has all been most worthwhile. I like fish and chips on Fridays.

Signing off,
Captain Underpants.

What?

> "To befriend the old lizard, use the plough in your fridge, and desire for violent winds!"

KIDS THESE DAYS...

Dear Retro Gamer,

Some bloke told me the other day that, because I am only 28, I can't be considered a true retro gamer and should stop classing myself as one. I think he said his name was Matthew something…

Anyway, it inspired me to write in and have a good old moan. Yes, I am younger than a lot of retro gamers, and no, I don't remember a lot of the games from the first time around. There were a lot of games I didn't get to play or I don't remember playing, such as *Manic Miner*, *Asteroids*, *Tempest*, *3D Monster Maze*, *Skool Daze*, etc. We didn't own an Atari or a NES, a Master System or even a Mega Drive. That doesn't mean I can't appreciate them now, though.

In the last couple of years I have built up a small collection, which includes, or has included, two Super Nintendos, a NES, a 2600 and a 7800, a ZX81 and a ZX Spectrum+, two Mega Drives, a PSone, a Nintendo 64 with a 64DD add-on, a Game Gear, three Game Boys, a Dingoo A320 with loads of emulators, countless plug-and-play retro devices and, by far my favourite, the mighty Vectrex.

Being a retro gamer has absolutely nothing to do with whether you played the games in the past; it's about enjoying them now. Surely the fact that there are younger people who like to play and collect the old games can only be a good thing? Why do I find that a lot of fellow hobbyists – not all of them, by any means – treat me with disrespect just because I wasn't there at the beginning?

Dennis Glatz II, Lansing, MI USA

Thanks for taking the time to write into us, Dennis. We've never understood the whole 'there at the beginning' thing either, but we're sad to admit that some people do feel that way about our hobby. There's absolutely no age limit on enjoying retro, and one of the most pleasing aspects of visiting Replay this year was witnessing the many kids who were having a whale of a time on machines that were around long before they were. Great games are timeless and can be enjoyed by everyone, regardless of their actual age.

DISCUSSED THIS MONTH

The X Factor Finale

This year's *X Factor* was disappointing, to say the least, and the whole team is rather glad that it's all over. Darran has been moaning that the entire result was fixed, while Stuart was just glad that a smug Gary Barlow didn't actually win. Kate, meanwhile, was more horrified by the obsessive fans, particularly one who showed off a tattoo – and, inadvertently, most of her crotch – while Kate was eating her tea.



>> [Arcade] We're not sure who Captain Underpants is. In fact, after re-reading his letter several times, we still don't know what he's on about.

CURRENTLY PLAYING





DARRAN

Metal Gear Solid HD Collection

MGS2 is as barmy and overrated as ever, but this remains a lovingly crafted creation. I can't wait to hear what Bluepoint Games' next project will be. Expect a review next month.

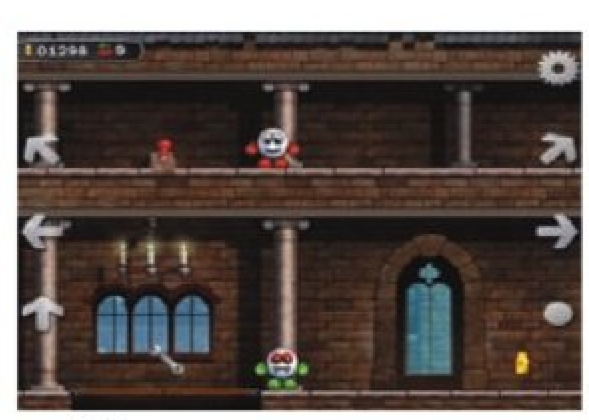




STUART

Rayman Origins

I've been playing through the superb *Rayman Origins*. It's a beautiful game that all discerning platform fans should immediately add to their collections. Even my seven-month-old loves it. Well, watching it…





DAVID

Dizzy: Prince Of The Yolkfolk

It's absolutely brilliant to see that this eggshellent character has made a comeback, and it's even better that Philip Oliver tells me there will be more *Dizzy* games in the future if this one sells well.

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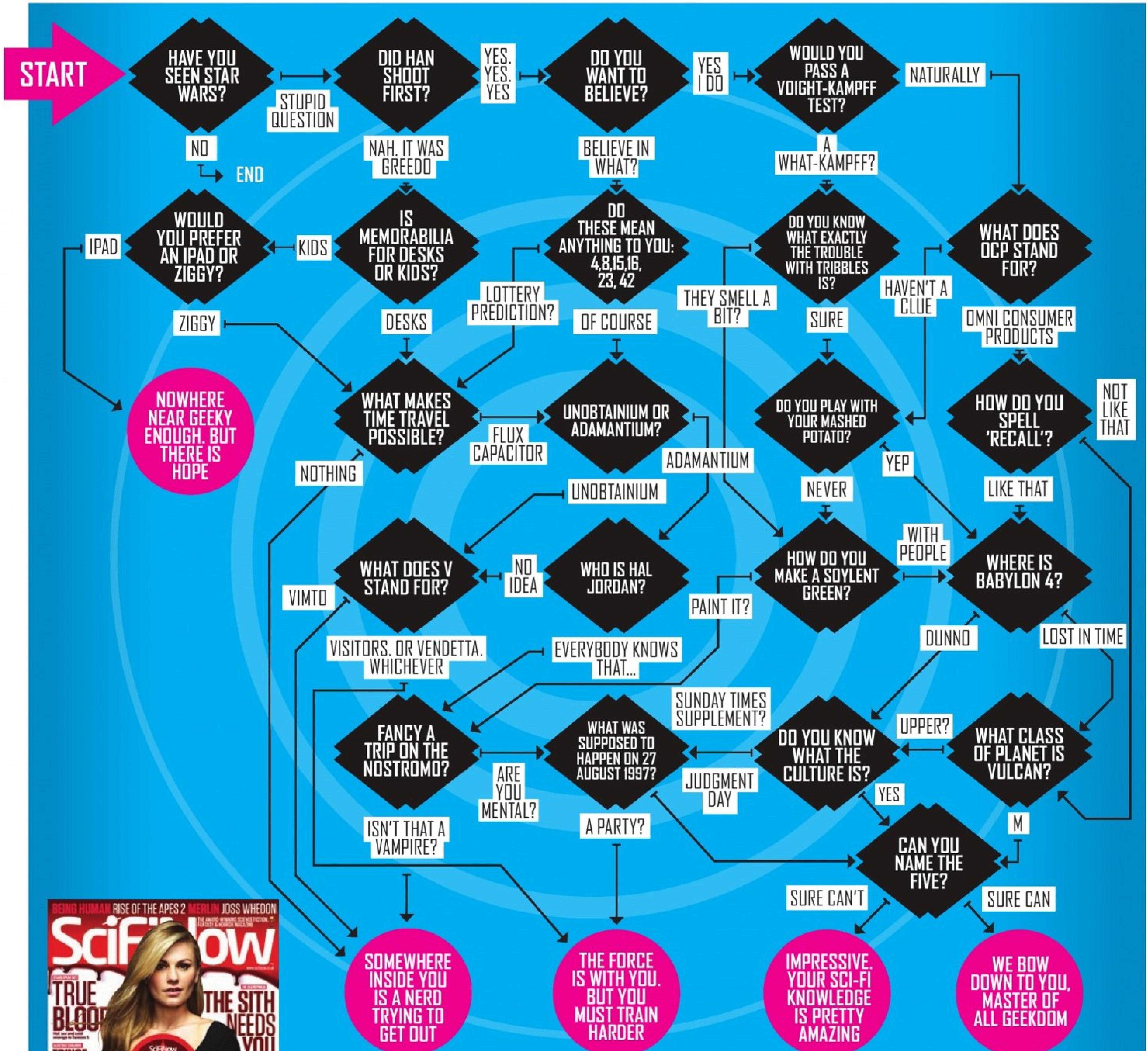
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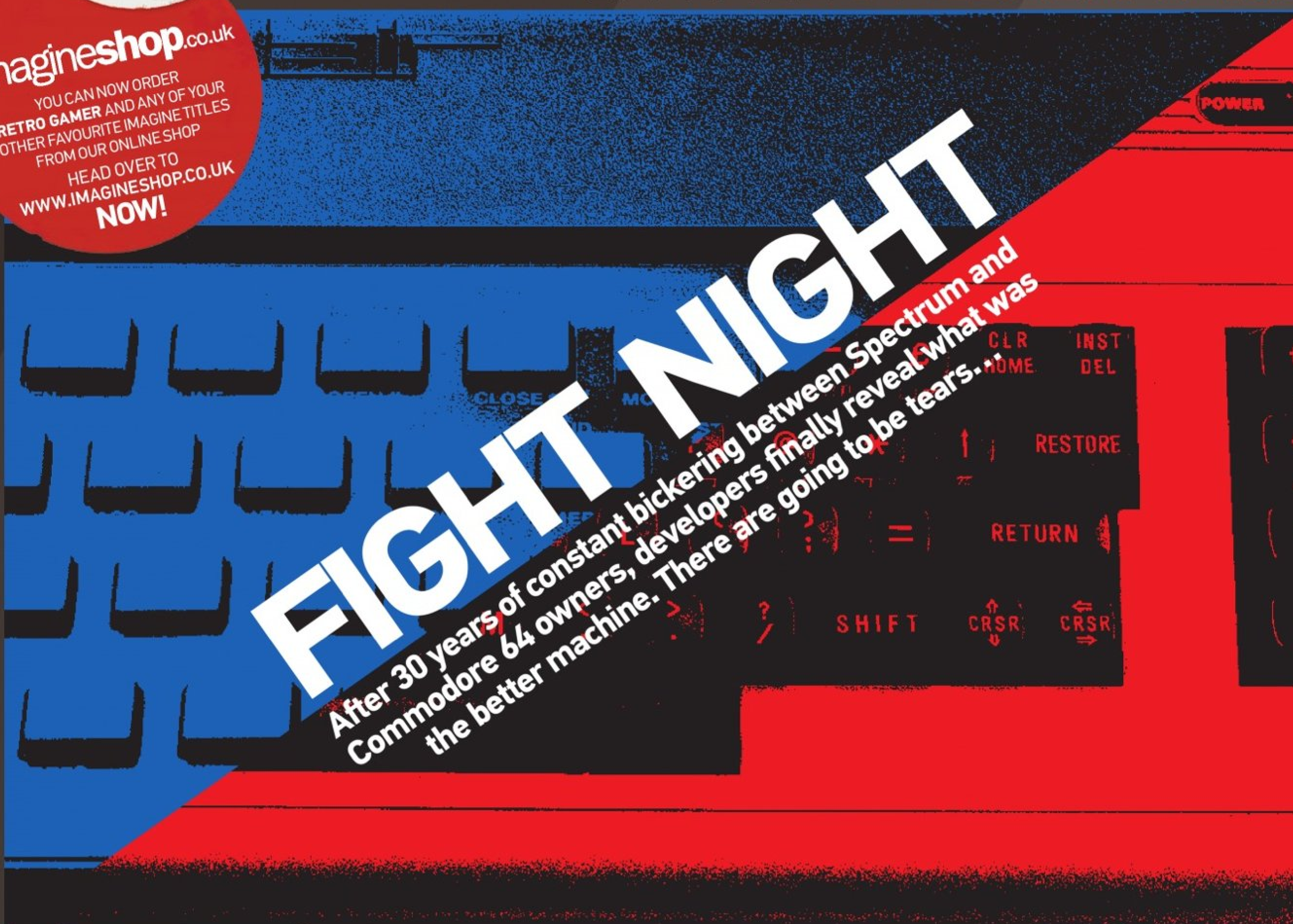
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FIGHT NIGHT

After 30 years of constant bickering between Spectrum and Commodore 64 owners, developers finally reveal what was the better machine. There are going to be tears…

ALSO IN THE NEXT ISSUE



3D Monster Maze
■ Malcolm Evans reveals how he created his scary first-person adventure for the ZX81. Just look out for the T-Rex!



Soul Calibur
■ With *Soul Calibur V* just around the corner, developers reveal why the soul still burns in Namco's fighter



Monty Python's Flying Circus
■ Simon Phipps explains how he turned *Python*'s zany world into a quirky videogame hit



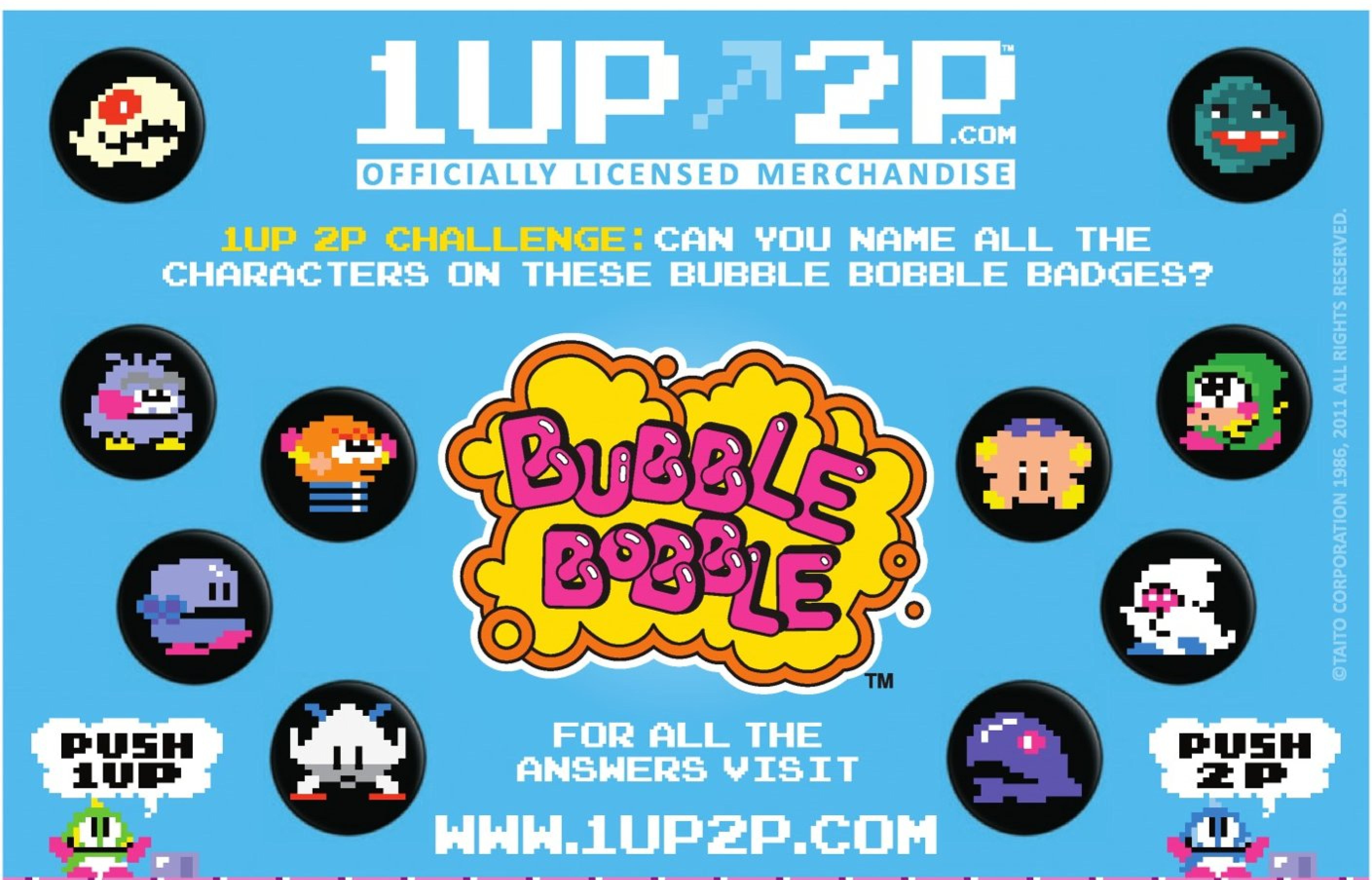
Thing On A Spring
■ The designer of one of Gremlin's most popular characters comes out of hiding to discuss his bizarre hero


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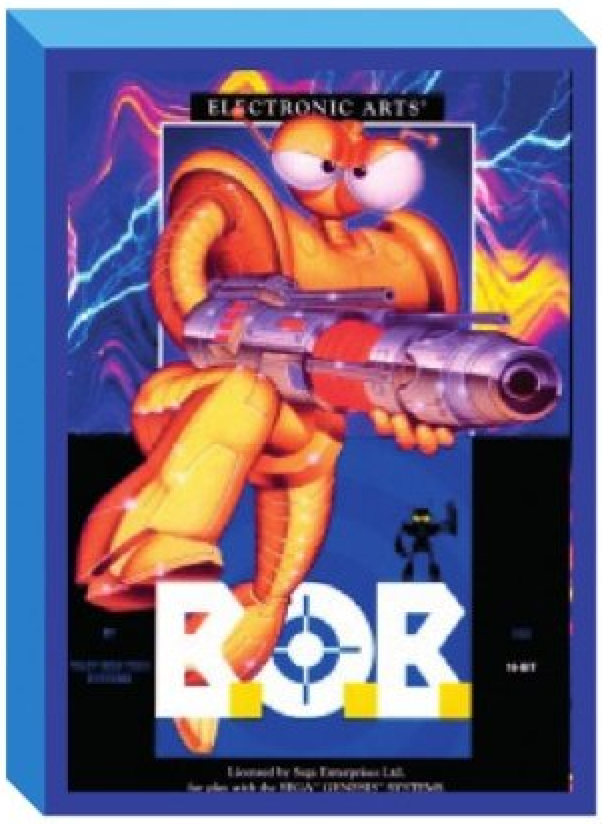

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ENDGAME



B.O.B.

» *B.O.B.* became a recognisable face on the 16-bit console scene for mating the anthropomorphic-animal-starring platformer with the popular run-around-and-shoot-stuff genre. The set-up saw our titular hero stealing his dad's car for a hot date before crashing it into an asteroid inhabited by nasty alien meanies. So does he escape and make it to his date in time?



01

» Thankfully, B.O.B. has dressed for his date in a sophisticated gold-coloured suit of armour complete with built-in arm-cannon. It comes in handy when this long-nosed alien appears on the scene, wanting to add B.O.B. to his ant farm.



02

» With the alien menace defeated, B.O.B. hops back into his car and finally sets off on his date. Seeing it was a crash that got him in this pickle in the first place, are sunglasses really wise – or even necessary – in outer space?



03

» B.O.B. finally arrives eighteen hours late to meet his blind (literally) date at Ed's Burgers (classy), and understandably she isn't best pleased. While receiving a stern dressing down, a far fitter-looking girl whips past and catches his eye.



04

» B.O.B. has a moment to think and decides to leave his narked date where she is (she can't see him anyway), and decides to chase down the hot-looking surfer chick that whizzed past moments ago. He puts his foot down, and makes a swift exit.



05

» He and the mystery girl sit on a small piece of space rock and stare out into endless galaxy. B.O.B. might have survived death from a hostile alien race but, let's be honest, judging by his actions, he appears to be a superficial womaniser.


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